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UNIVERSITY VOCATIONAL AWARDS COUNCIL

Work-based Learning Futures II

Edited by:

Professor Jonathan Garnett

Professor David Young

Work-based Learning Futures II

**Proceedings from the Work-based Learning Futures II Conference,
Middlesex, May 2008**

Edited by:

Professor Jonathan Garnett

Professor David Young

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Introduction

Work-based Learning Futures II

The second conference in the Work-based Learning Futures series was held in May 2008 at the Trent Park Campus of Middlesex University. The conference was organised jointly by the Centre for Excellence in Work Based Learning at Middlesex University and the School of Flexible and Partnership Learning at the University of Derby. As for the previous conference, held at The University of Derby's Buxton campus in April 2007, the membership was composed of experienced colleagues in the field of work-based learning who wished to share their expertise with a view to informing the future development of work-based learning within the higher education curriculum.

Work-based learning has an increasing number of forms as higher education institutions seek to engage with employers and demonstrate their worth in the knowledge driven society. The policy context, exemplified by Leitch, for the development of work-based learning has never been more favourable. The Higher Education Funding Council for England has made available over £105 million to support Universities to develop the capability to engage with employers. Work-based learning clearly has an important part to play in this agenda but it is far from unproblematic or uncontested.

The economic climate is testing the resolve of employers to invest in learning and development and the very nature of work-based learning makes it appear high risk to some higher education institutions. Work-based learning certainly makes new demands of higher education concepts, practices, structures and underpinning epistemological beliefs. We believe that work-based learning has the potential to illuminate our understanding of the core concerns of higher education learning, teaching, assessment and quality. This publication is intended to shed insight into some of the ways a range of universities understand and are implementing work-based learning.

The papers are presented in three themes:

- Work-based learning forms, perspectives and quality assurance
- Work-based learning learners and courses
- Work-based learning and stakeholders

A fourth section describes the Institute for Work Based Learning at Middlesex University and University of Derby Corporate. There is a brief presentation of the work of the Middlesex Centre for Excellence in Work Based Learning and an introduction to the new (2008) Work Based Learning e-Journal. Information is also provided about two work-based learning networks of relevance to readers. These are The Universities Association for Lifelong Learning (UALL) UK WBL network and Recognising Learning through Work, facilitated by Jean O'Neill through the South East England Consortium (SEEC).

As editors we have sought to allow authors to write using a style appropriate to their own purposes and experience rather than impose a tight house style.

Section one considers forms and perspectives of work-based learning and quality issues posed. Costley and Armsby provide a critical review of forms of work-based learning in higher education. They examine the contested relationship between academic work and learning at work, discussing the academic integrity and authenticity of work-based learning as a field of study in higher education. Their examples focus on recognising the experiential learning of professionals and on research and development projects undertaken as part of university study within learners' own organisations or professional areas. Ramsey adopts a social constructionist perspective in discussing how universities might recognise, assess and reward learning-in-practice as an ongoing performance rather than historic achievement. Garnett proposes an "intellectual capital" approach to the quality dimensions of work-based university level learning designed to facilitate the achievement of specific outcomes of significance to the learner, their work and the higher education institution.

Section two deals with work-based learners and some of their higher education programmes. Guenigault, Young and Challis offer the reflections of three different voices – the learner, the tutor and the external examiner – on the development of a personal narrative approach to the final project in a negotiated master's degree in work-based learning undertaken within the Learning through Work Scheme at the University of Derby. Hallet articulates the contribution of work-based learning and reflective practice to the personal and professional development of Foundation degree graduates in the early years. Demonstrating the capacity of work-based approaches to support learning at the highest academic levels, du Plock and Barber reflect on supporting – highly-successful professionals – to "re-story" their achievements as doctoral candidates for The Doctorate in Psychotherapy by Public Works of Middlesex University. Finally in this section, Workman offers a critique of the assessment of prior experiential learning (APEL). This takes us beyond notions of credit claimed against specific validated University modules to encompass a wide range of personal learnings and explore tensions which may arise between notions of the value of learning generated by work and that which is taught in higher education.

Stakeholders in work-based learning is the focus of section three. Critten discusses the process of researching one's own practice in the company of others in the organisation and asks questions about how the organisation as a whole can be engaged in the process, perhaps through extended dialogue where senior managers too would have to engage in the learning process to the ultimate benefit of the company. Helyer and Hooker discuss the practicalities of engaging employers in university level work-based learning and report on their efforts to quantify the "bottom line" benefits for employers who choose to engage in higher education. Harvey, in discussing cost implications for both employees,

employers and providers, explores a major issue – the provision of cost-effective work-based learning opportunities – for those institutions who wish to expand their activities within the field. Dunn, Mumford and Roodhouse offer an indication of the views of employees about work-based learning and its value to them. They report the results of a large on-line survey which identified that there is significant employee interest in training and development at higher levels. However, there are questions for universities and their systems if they are to respond successfully to this interest. Finally, Basiel, Howarth and Commins provide some reflections on the shift in e-learning from the offline student to the networked learner. Through an example of seafarers as remote learners, they demonstrate the value, in using Web 2.0 technologies, of an open participation approach and the need for good organisation throughout.

Jonathan Garnett David Young
September 2008

Work-based learning forms, perspectives and quality assurance

Critiquing work-based learning in higher education – a review

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Introduction

New learning relationships have developed between higher education and work that have been the result of the widening concept of knowledge. Some universities have responded and higher level study is now being extended by introducing new programmes that include work-based learning. Work-based learners tend to be either experienced workers that have valuable knowledge but no higher education, who work full time (usually older learners) and study part time, or full time students who undertake work placements and sandwich courses. Work-based learning programmes and modules include elements of learning such as recognition of experiential learning by awarding higher education credit, use of learning agreements so students can negotiate their programmes of study, development of reflective learning practices, and practitioner-led researched work-based projects that are assessed against higher education criteria.

Some exponents of this new relationship between higher education and work appear to talk in fairly narrow and vocational terms about learning for, through and in work resulting in criticism from both those who are not engaged with work-based learning and those who are engaged with work-based learning, but support an analytic and reflexive approach. Whatever shade of pedagogy is proposed in relation to work-based learning, resistance is strong from some more conventional colleagues and institutions to the whole idea of a relationship between academic work and learning at work.

We are interested in discussing the validity of this resistance in terms of the academic integrity and authenticity of work-based learning as a field of study in higher education. We argue that some of the concerns from what we term more conventional colleagues (although we do not mean to infer there is a fixed opinion from one set of academics) may have some validity in certain circumstances. It is acknowledged that higher education practices can be slow to change and there may be legitimate reasons for resistance. Many colleagues appear unwilling to move into new ways of thinking about learning and whilst work-based learning may need close scrutiny as it matures in higher education, its success in engaging many non-traditional learners in higher level learning suggests it should be welcomed and explored. These successes and developments are supported by evidence from referenced literature, for example recent conferences such as the Impact of Work Based Learning (2007), and special editions of the journals Assessment and Evaluation (2006) and the Journal of Workplace Learning (2006) focussing on the development of work-based learning.

This review paper addresses critiques of Work Based Studies (WBS) from relevant sources drawn from practice where WBS has been a subject of contention. The paper will show evidence of critiques of WBS pedagogic practice which we believe identify some of the major critiques that WBS practitioners have encountered. We seek to:

- *discuss the relevance and validity of the critiques*
- *reflect on what a considered WBS practitioner critique might be*

We particularly highlight two of the learning technologies that are typically used with work-based learners in our examples; recognising the experiential learning of professionals and research and development projects undertaken as part of university study within their own organisation or professional area.

Critiques of work-based learning

Critiques of work-based learning courses in universities are not evident in much of the published literature even though tutor/ researchers in the field are aware that there are reservations about the substance of work-based learning programmes and modules from some parties. The issues mainly appear in the grey literature and are often the topic of validation events in universities, and some of them are discussed in the literature concerning issues of academic value. From insider sources, the following issues as listed in tables 1 and 2 are raised by managers (concerned about viability) and academics (concerned about legitimacy). These issues are then expanded and discussed from a work-based learning practitioner perspective.

Table 1: Issues raised by managers concerned about viability
1. labour intensive support required from university academics
2. too complicated and demanding for university systems
3. uncertainties about its academic benefit and standards
4. not cost-effective
5. over reliance on support from non-academic advisers and mentors such as employers

Table 2: Issues raised by academics concerned about legitimacy
5. over reliance on support from non-academic advisers and mentors such as employers
6. an overemphasis on process rather than academic content
7. lack of subject discipline-specific content
8. knowledge arising from experiential learning is difficult to codify
9. assessment not by written exams

1. Labour intensive support required from university academics

There are issues relating to supporting and assessing work-based learning which may be linked to prevailing reward and promotion criteria within institutions. Garnett (2007: 24) argues for a flexible curriculum structure and for staff who can support such structures who are likely to be people who can facilitate as well as “teach” and who can assess work that is recognised as of value to work situations as well as having an underpinning academic value. We argue that this makes work-based learning not labour intensive but labour specific, ie it requires staff who have work-based learning expertise. Some universities have not embraced and can be misguided in their approach to staff time, believing that staff should operate the same time patterns as they do for more conventional full-time undergraduate programmes. Staff need a particular range of pedagogical skills and abilities and an understanding of work-based learning concepts (Boud and Costley, 2006) which they use in a focussed way.

Accrediting experiential learning, for example, is a process which can greatly enhance opportunities for work-based learners. However, APEL requires expertise in advising and assessing. Some universities have separate accreditation boards and some include accreditation in their examination boards. Whichever way it is done, there has to be an understanding of accreditation processes from the key colleagues involved. APEL also requires expertise in assessment of the claims and related appropriate quality assurance processes which again should be no more exacting than conventional assessment procedures but does require knowledge of APEL processes. By ensuring that students can make their claims for credit without having to engage in unnecessary protocols that have been set up for different kinds of assessment purposes, academic labour time is more concentrated.

2. Too complicated and demanding for university systems

Following from Gibbons et al's (1994) distinction between mode one and mode two knowledge, Scott et al, (2004: 42) discuss the importance of:

... the way universities understand and, in the process, construct relationships between academic and professional knowledge.

A work-based programme needs to be embedded within a university, in terms of staff understanding of it and in terms of systems and structures to support learning. Relating to this particular group of learners, many teachers/tutors in work-based learning have found that university structures and processes are not always responsive to their particular needs and this may be a consideration for the university.

HEIs remain deficient in the development and implementation of approaches and structures for initiating and facilitating the construction and operation of work-based learning partnerships between HEIs and other providers of high-level learning. (Garnett, 2007: 25)

Without flexible systems, for example, that enable off campus enrolment, work-based learning candidates' needs cannot be met. But, it was not only work-based learners that required universities to rethink systems and processes.

Many courses designed for mature learners call for more of a sense of support for the learner's autonomous learning rather than a didactic model of teaching and learning. Most university systems are designed to process the standard undergraduate candidate that forms their majority business. It is the whole university system that suffers from, for example, as one colleague pointed out:

"I tell my students to tell the people at the car park barrier and in reception that they are my visitors not my students."

the implication being that university systems only operate on a model of student deficit.

3. Uncertainties about its academic benefit and standards

Some academic scepticism about work-based learning arises because of a concern that the economic value of developing the workforce is being prioritised over the academic value of developing individual people. Changes occurring in higher education relate to wider international, economic and cultural transformations, not least the marketisation and strident forms of managerialism associated with global capitalism. These are widely seen as having negative affects on higher education or may be viewed with suspicion by some who would support the general principle of a widening participation in higher education. Work-based learning can be seen as a result of these changes that have focused on the shift from an elite to a mass model of higher education and can be considered as becoming more market retentive and reactive (Light and Cox, 2001).

Using the example of the use of APEL in work-based learning, it has been shown (Garrick and Usher, 2000) that knowledge from APEL may in some circumstances be viewed as commodity, premised on the epistemological principle of competency as realised in experiential learning which has become a contested term (Gee, 1990). So, whilst experiential learning can mean access to higher education using alternative forms of knowledge, it may also signify an instrumentalist approach where students' experiences are transformed into a set of saleable assets through a list of attributes with which they can market themselves. This is one way in which the discourse of experiential learning

can link and align with what is organisationally desirable – more productivity, flexible working, increased efficiency and profitability – and with what is personally desirable – greater self-fulfilment (Garrick and Usher, 2000).

Criticisms of project-based learning can be made in relation to its use of practitioner-based enquiry that:

... is rooted in nature/nurture and macro/micro debates in social and behavioural science and in arguments about the nature of knowledge.
(Murray and Lawrence, 2000: 18)

Gathering data as an insider needs careful attention, especially concerning ethical considerations, questions about insider bias and validity. Work-based learning as a field of study in higher education employs a research and development approach to work-based projects. The purpose of the projects, to make actual change either during or at the end of the research practice, provides particular constraints to researchers because they are working within systems where there are limits to research practice and change. Their experience and situatedness within their area of professional expertise is a necessary prerequisite for this kind of study. They need to access particular insider information, inform and bring about significant changes to practice. Their situation is important because there is usually a right time and place for innovation to be introduced. Successful projects may be in some part due to the practitioner-researchers' ability to negotiate around normative constraints – how they balance systemic norms with their creativity and ingenuity.

Incredibly, after at least 15 years of higher education work-based learning modules and programmes, not only do universities not provide an administrative structure within which work-based learning can easily function (Garnett, 2007) but they also have no or little conception concerning the academic imperatives and functioning of work-based learning embedded within their academic frameworks. For example, the legitimacy of the workplace as a context for higher education student research projects is a question that comes with some concerns. One of the distinctive features of practice is the extent to which practitioners act autonomously, delivering effective services. These activities also offer opportunities for learning where problems have to be addressed, tried and tested solutions adapted, new approaches devised and appropriate actions taken. These are the kinds of processes, informed by theory, that it is possible to illuminate, practise and assess through work-based learning projects. Clearly, careful consideration needs to be given to the legitimacy of the workplace as a context for such research.

There is a sense in which work-based learning can be seen as representing a conflation of what have hitherto been high and low aspects of intellectual culture and in that sense it can be emancipatory. Many work-based learning practitioners came into the field because it is able to recognise knowledges and practices of people whose contribution to society had not been fully documented and recognised by higher education. Work-based learning has the propensity to enable people to access higher education and to participate in the continuing development of people whose abilities particularly lie in the application of knowledge. Work-based learners are enabled to engage with the complexities of knowledge in practice underpinned by theory. Many work-based learners enter programmes of study to develop themselves in new ways of thinking. They are already experts within their own fields and know how to access familiar, paradigmatic professional and subject-based knowledge. Work-based learning provides the opportunity to develop learning in ways that have been differently described as transdisciplinary learning (Gibbons et al, 1994; Barnett, 2000), horizontal learning (Bernstein, 1999), inter-connectivity (Antonacopoulou et al, 2005) generic, multidimensional and inter-professional learning. Certain features such as learner autonomy; individual development; and work as the main context for learning contribute significantly to achievements in work-based learning.

4. Not cost effective

This issues links closely with the issues raised in points 1 and 2. If universities thought more in terms of work-based learning provision then they would not need to construct complex ways to fit work-based learning modules and programmes into conventional taught programme structures. Systems should be properly devised to fit contemporary programmes. As Garnett (2007: 25) comments:

...funding models and expectations based upon a traditional full time student are not helpful to developing a flexible and customized provision to respond to the imperatives and timeframes of employers. ... to move from the concept of the standard prescribed course to support learning pathways of variable durations and credit values.

The individualised nature of work-based learning studies can make the advisory system more expensive than the large cohort approach developed to deal with the massification of HE. However, approaches, often in e-learning, are countering this whilst still trying to maintain the benefits of an individualised approach. Similarly, models of work-based learning that emulate the collaborative nature of work projects can provide economies of scale.

5. Over reliance on support from non-academic advisers and mentors such as employers

Managers and academics alike have often raised concerns about how to control quality, standards and the assessment process when expertise from outside the university is used. Work-based learning recognises practitioner knowledge and endeavours to utilise it appropriately in tandem with the expertise of work-based learning academics in higher education, part of whose role is to mediate between academia and the work place.

6. An overemphasis on process rather than academic content

Work-based learning in higher education usually expects students to negotiate their learning through a learning contract or agreement. Furthermore, work-based learning usually implies reflective/reflexive practice, learning to learn and self management of learning. The relationships between the professional context and the university are usually forged by work-based learning students within a planning framework established by the university to assure the level of the final academic award. The candidates are able to build such a relationship because they have to justify and agree their individual programme to both the university and their organisation or professional group.

Gustavs and Clegg (2005) demonstrate that the three-way partnership between candidate, university and organisation can become problematic and that much of individual and organisational learning is concerned with only the appearance of having particular capabilities.

7. Lack of subject discipline-specific content

Issues arise because of the paradigmatic shift involved in work-based learning programmes where much of the learning is not based on disciplinary knowledge but broader and practice-based knowledge (this has been cited in the literature as an internal obstacle).

A core consideration for work-based learning is the philosophical position taken by the institution to it on epistemological and educational grounds.
(Garnett, 2007: 24)

If we are to search for dominating value systems in higher education then a significant place would appear to be at the level of the discipline. The disciplines use APEL for **specific** credit – assessed against the learning outcomes of an already validated higher education course, but find **general** credit – credit assessed against general higher education level descriptors, problematic. This is because of the way knowledge has been constructed, and because they use specific kinds of discourse controlled by a particular paradigm (Becher, 1989), which requires us to become subjects of that discourse and

speak through it in a world only understood within the same controlling paradigm (Scholes, 1985). It is not therefore surprising that there is a tendency not to risk a challenge to the hierarchies of knowledge implicit within each paradigm, by accrediting what may be seen as purely experiential aspects of their disciplinary knowledge.

Experience gained in work situations is not always subject-discipline specific. Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) or Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) or the Validation des Aquis de l'Experience (VAE) in France are established but relatively underused process in higher education in most countries (Garnett et al, 2004). This may be because APEL not only challenges the traditional University monopoly of knowledge but also challenges other established processes and social constructions.

Academics who accredit work-based learning come from particular disciplines themselves and sometimes find it hard to break out of a particular paradigm to assess learning from work and recognise credit in more than one dimension of subject specialism. Because work-based learning is often transdisciplinary it does not have the history of such knowledge construction; it constructs knowledge through praxis recognising knowledge cultures that have evolved outside of universities. Where work-based learning is seen as lying outside the disciplines it can be viewed as a threat to existing systems. The subject benchmarks that already exist for established disciplines are likely to present obstacles and form boundaries to recognising first hand experiential learning because they are designed to assess specific learning taught on campus. Work-based learning practitioners have developed generic level descriptors and learning outcomes that are tailored specifically for people at work. These specifications work well for APEL in a transdisciplinary field of learning.

In many ways the challenge to accrediting learning has been greater for existing disciplinary areas than it has in work-based learning because of resistance that originates from their epistemological roots and well-rehearsed methodologies. Work-based learning is seemingly free of the epistemological hierarchy imposed in "pure" disciplines. It is, though, in danger of constructing its own knowledge hierarchies informed by dominant legitimising value systems that are currently competing for power and control within the field of study. The first may be seen as ... *a dangerous, crude vocationalism*... (Rattansi and Reeder, 1992) and the second as that which wishes to preserve a knowledge hierarchy (Foucault, 1980; Stanley, 1990).

A transdisciplinary approach can attract criticism to work-based, practitioner-led projects. Most higher education programmes are centred round a subject specialism and this is in keeping with conventional structures of universities. The transdisciplinary nature of work-based learning is based on generic assessment criteria that do not require in-depth knowledge of a particular subject or body of knowledge that is necessarily held in a

discipline. The abilities of the work-based learner are judged upon broad, generic criteria that are directly related to practical, real world outcomes. This approach is not embedded in university practices; most university staff have not had an education in this way of learning and how to assess across disciplines and across professional roles (Boud and Tennant, 2006). There is no stock of external examiners that can be called upon to judge the outcomes of such projects and there is little specific theoretical background in this area to conceptualise the field of study. Many academics are sceptical about transdisciplinarity and cannot find the depth of substantive knowledge to satisfy their expectations. The complexities of knowledge in practice underpinned by theory that are claimed in this paper as being the essence of work-based learning are not always understood as having an equivalence to conventional academic work that can be judged by experts from the disciplines.

There is some evidence however that in conventional academic work, it is not substantive knowledge that is later prized. For example, in a PhD study, Pole (2000) demonstrates that:

... the esoteric nature of the substantive knowledge gained was seen to be of limited use after the completion of the doctorate. In such cases the substantive knowledge gained from the doctorate was seen as less important or valuable than other forms of knowledge and skills.

Conventional PhD students' work is likely to be theoretically positioned within a disciplinary framework. Work-based doctorates develop theory that arises from practice rather than being theory-led.

8. Knowledge arising from experiential learning is difficult to codify

Through APEL, alternative forms of knowledge that break with the old canons of "scientificity" are evaluated and validated. Until recently they were deemed insignificant, "subjugated knowledges" in Foucault's terms that were marginalised by mainstream academic knowledges that surely expand our understanding of epistemology. More recently, through EU initiatives, a certain percentage of experiential learning is now becoming more acceptable and recognised by universities.

In work-based learning we now have a position where there is a certain freedom within existing academic and social structures to recognise knowledge that arises from pragmatic, work-based experience that has been reflected upon by the practitioner. Foucault (1980) critiques scientific epistemology as a discursive practice that is premised on power dynamics and so the knowledges arising from work-based learning may be seen as emancipatory, for example by recognising the knowledges in communities that have less power and that have not been recognised as higher knowledge. However, there is a danger in the APEL process becoming instrumentalist.

APEL can be seen as challenging the power dynamics of traditional academic culture if it is used to recognise knowledge that has not been prescribed by academics as that which is deemed worthy of incorporation into the higher education curriculum. However, it can be argued that whatever the parameters, the role of the University as the accreditor still means it is the investing and controlling agency; and hence it is the broad and slowly changing value-systems embedded in the intellectual structures and apparatus of the academy which still predominate. The concept of a single value system for higher education, even as broadly conceived as scientific rationalism, is unfounded. However, a struggle over what is the nature of knowledge and learning is taking place in relation to APEL. The changes arising from this struggle can be seen as transforming the production, validation and communication of knowledge and re-conceptualising the meaning of learning (Lyotard, 1984; Usher and Edwards, 1994). Solomon and McIntyre (2000) have called this ... *the de-institutionalisation of knowledge*... but APEL seems to have made such a radical break from traditional knowledge production that some universities continue to reject it, and many use it only minimally (Merrifield et al, 2000; Johnson, 2002).

9. Assessment not by written exams

This criticism is not unique to work-based learning and has been discussed in the literature on learning and assessment for many years. A range of arguments for and against written exams are presented; not least is the idea that written exams can control against the rising tide of plagiarism. With the highly contextualised nature of work-based learning studies, plagiarism is less of an issue than in most subject areas. Also, it means that mass examinations would not be possible. The individualised nature of the study calls for an individualised assessment process.

Discussion – a more considered work-based learning practitioner informed critique

Usher and Solomon (1999) problematised the aim of corporations to develop highly productive and efficient workforces as the means of maintaining competitive advantage. Such workforces must be “knowledgeable” – capable of teamwork, flexibility and self-management. They note that work-based learning delivers such knowledge, due to its relevance to work. There is a focus on self-management of learning in work-based learning that runs alongside the need for corporations to regulate and control their employees in order to maximise productivity. When employees’ self-manage learning that is employer sanctioned and sponsored, it is often easy to see the fulfilment of employees’ personal learning objectives as synonymous with the fulfilment of organisational objectives. This allows for corporate regulation to be realised through employees’ “freely” embraced desire to better themselves through learning. Such learning can be genuinely enabling, of course, giving individuals abilities and qualifications to remain employable in a highly unstable job market. Usher and Solomon (1999) do not say that work-based learning is simply a manipulative tool wielded by corporations, but that the appearance that work-based

learning meets the needs of employer and employee in a straightforward way is misleading. It can mask complex relations of power, in which universities are also implicated.

It has been argued (Butler, 1993; Costley, 2000) that “work”, as an activity worthy of higher education credits, should be interpreted as activity that may be paid or unpaid and that is inclusive of wide-ranging experiences. The Universities Association of Lifelong Learning (UK) Work Based Learning network states their aim is ... *to promote work-based learning for, in and through work, paid or unpaid...* (UALL, 2008).

There is a concern that some academics may be trying to simplify the curriculum content rather than enable access to higher education for groups who may not previously have had this benefit. Universities on the one hand wish to capitalise on the work-based student market and, on the other, to retain their position as legitimators of knowledge through offering non-instrumental learning that has a critical edge.

Work-based learning also has to be careful about the way it defines itself. If learning from paid work is prioritised, recognised and regarded as more valuable than from unpaid work, then work-based learning may be simply swapping the dominating value positions and practices of the disciplines for those of employment. The tension concerning the legitimacy of work-based knowledge in a higher education setting is crucial in understanding the differences and similarities both within the field of work-based learning and between work-based learning and more conventional education programmes. Work-based learning extends beyond discrete boundaries of knowledge formulated by the conceptual frameworks of the disciplines. The knowledge of work-based learners is presented in unfamiliar ways to that of disciplinary knowledge and there is a need for the learners (and the tutors) to develop a meta cognition to recognise and learn from such knowledge and experiences.

Work-based learning has used APEL to great advantage in allowing people to gain access to higher education. Also, it has done much to challenge traditional discipline-based assumptions associated with APEL practice (Armsby et al, 2006; Garnett, 1998) through seeking to recognise the knowledge and abilities that come about through experiential learning. To conceptualise APEL through the field of work-based learning enables an identification of certain value positions that may mediate in the legitimisation of knowledge claims for experiential learning. The first set of value positions cluster around power and control within the infrastructure of universities and how this determines what counts as knowledge. The second addresses the power of the disciplines to skew the depth and significance of prior and experiential learning.

The professional and the academic can be thought of as an artificial polarity (Costley, 2000b) especially if viewed from the perspective of the work-based learners who already engage in many of the activities that enable their learning by virtue of being at work.

Conclusion

Resistance to changes brought about by work-based learning in higher education can come about for many different reasons. Some people appear to have a reasonable concern about what change may entail; some resistance may be based on assumptions about what is seen as a vocational field of study; for some there appears to be a fear about the loss of what is already known and how to engage with new structures and paradigms.

The developing field of work-based learning has a variety of influences and is taking time to expand into a coherent field in its own right. However, we contend that it is now time for the higher level learning of work-based learning to be articulated and theorised clearly through scholarly work and these debates need to become a greater part of the general discussions concerning work-based learning in higher education. Critiques of work-based learning can be discussed and practical issues and cases where work-based learning has been the subject of concern can be debated.

Work-based learning academics need to critique their own practice and engage in scholarship that will inform and develop the field. They need to think outside disciplinary boundaries and also to ... *draw upon and enhance subject disciplines without being circumscribed by them...* (Garnett, 2007: 26). The story of work-based learning in a higher education setting needs to be told by those who are involved in its development. It does appear that, particularly at lower levels of work-based learning, a preoccupation with so called "vocationalism" exists that is not underpinned by a higher level approach to knowledge and to learning and this needs to be addressed. Added to this, the focus by governments on meeting the economic needs provides a rhetoric that is being accepted into the discourse of many work-based learning practitioners and other academics as well. Work-based learning is being funded in many instances because of its direct advantage for workplace performance and in turn its benefit to national economies.

The way we are obliged to talk about our field of expertise does not always match with the goals and aspirations we have for what we do. Although this is the case for many colleagues in higher education, the irony for work-based learning practitioners is that the very subject of our field, ie "work" is the key focus of the all powerful commercial sector which is both supportive to the concept of work-based learning and also pervading higher education itself, thus providing work-based learning with a remarkable accord. For some of us this also causes some unease about core processes and values.

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Recognising learning-in-practice as change in practice

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Introduction

In this paper I want to explore how we can recognise, and so assess and reward, learning-in-practice as if the development of more skilled practice is what really matters. It is too easy for universities to assess knowledge, a learning-about-practice and, through this, to assume that changes in and development of practice will automatically result from an ability to articulate understanding of causal theories that may appear to apply to any given practice context. However, especially within my own field of management studies, there has been a growing scepticism of the transferability of academic theories, concepts and models to the practice of management. There is an ongoing debate around what has been called the “relevance gap” (eg Starkey & Madan, 2001; Mintzberg, 2004). So this leaves me with questions of what is learning-in-practice like and how can universities recognise that it has gone on and, more importantly I think, is continuing to go on?

In this short paper it will not be possible to do justice to all the complexities involved in these questions, so I will use a story of some learning that I have recently undertaken in a large engineering company to illuminate my own learning-in-practice. From this story of learning I will then be able to explore how my learning might be recognised as an ongoing performance of learning rather than as an historic achievement of learning. This change of focus from achievement to process of learning provides higher education institutions with some significant questions about how we recognise and reward learning. For my argument is that university award structures are designed to recognise and reward historic achievement rather than ongoing, lifelong learning.

Before, I tell my story however, I need to explicate understandings of what learning and practice might be for I come to these from a specific, social constructionist perspective that emphasises ongoing social relating as a process by which realities we experience, and learn in, are continuously (re)created. So in the next two sections, I first outline how I understand learning-in-practice as a change in practice before articulating a very social understanding of practice as an improvised, relational performance rather than as individual, agentic action. Having set these premises in place I can then outline what I call a scholarship of practice, as it developed within my work with Premier Engineering. I finally, draw conclusions on the need to develop new structures of recognition and accreditation of work-based learning.

What is learning?

In recent years much of university learning has been dominated by learning outcomes. Most of these have tended to be associated with intrapsychic phenomena such as knowledge, skills or competencies. It is interesting that in talking about assessment, only Bloom's (1956) cognitive taxonomy is frequently referred to. I have never heard reference to his affective taxonomy in discussion of assessing student work and progression in Higher Education. But even this second taxonomy would leave out a key learning outcome of any work-based learning. For if learning occurs in the workplace it is more than likely to include some change in practice. And my interest in this paper is in how we might recognise university learning that creates a change in practice. For, as Marx (1974) pointed out ... *the philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways – the point however is to change it.*

Where practice has been foregrounded in learning has been in the work of Argyris and Schön (1974) and Bateson (1973). There are apparent similarities in their models of learning, for example both note a qualitative difference between learning a better practice and the learning how to recognise and extend current ways of thinking that increased people's capacity to challenge the parameters within which decisions for action are taken. Argyris and Schön write of single and double loop learning, whilst Bateson identifies 3 levels of learning:

- LI occurs in the changing of specific actions to improve performance
- LII occurs when a learner is able to change the ...*set of alternatives from which choice [of action] is made...* (Bateson, 1973:64)
- LIII is the ability to learn about LII learning. It involves becoming able to derive the principles upon which "*sets of alternatives*" can be developed.

Bateson also called this Deutero-learning and it is possible to recognise close similarities with Argyris' and Schön's double loop learning.

What can be meant by practice?

There has been a considerable growth in an academic interest in practices; what has been called a "*practice turn*" (Schatzki, Knorr Cetina and Savigny, 2001). Schatzki and his colleagues collected an array of different approaches that all privileged practice as a unit of sociological analysis. Whilst acknowledging the many variants Schatzki (2001:2) attempted to sum up an overarching conception of practices as:

... embodied, materially mediated arrays of human activity.

I shall return to this work momentarily but, for now, I would want to point out that this approach to practice sees it as a unit of analysis by which academic researchers can know or understand society better. It is, therefore, a scholarly approach that continues to centre knowledge as output from inquiry. In this case it is knowledge **about** practice and practices and knowledge about chosen topics of inquiry as mediated through practice and practices.

A second understanding of practice centres on work and the competence needed to work successfully and this is a common theme within work-based learning (Boud and Solomon, 2001). Beckett and Hagar (2002) expressly identify practice with work, although they do emphasise that work includes activities outside conventional paid employment, such as domestic responsibilities, institutional involvement and hobbies. Here, the ubiquitous term “best practice” becomes one goal of practice learning. It is important to empathise, however, that in most approaches to work-based learning, local context is important to the correct application of a “best practice”. A “best practice” would be unlikely to come purely from academic theory but would likely be developed as a contingent practice similar to Argyris and Schön’s (1974) theory in action that suggests that in “such-and-such” circumstances “such-and-such” actions are likely to have particular consequences. Here again, despite an emphasis on practice, knowledge can be seen to precede practice. A skilful practitioner is understood as knowing an array of “best” practices and also able to know a particular working context and so will determine which practice is appropriate to that context. I want to suggest, however, that an alternative understanding is available; one that offers an understanding of practice, which opens up a scholarship of practice, where learning occurs within emerging social performance. Schatzki (2001) pointed to this in his phrase: *...embodied ... arrays of human activity*.

So a third approach to practice is to treat it as a social performance that constructs what we experience as real. This is an ongoing process. It is not so much that we live in a socially constructed world, but that we are constructing, performing our worlds in moment-by-moment relations. A helpful analogy here is that of improvisation. Actors or musicians create a new play or music. Whilst they might use old riffs (Barratt, 1998) they will always be doing something new, something again for the first time (Shotter, 2000).

There are three aspects of this social understanding of practice that will shape how we can recognise and so reward work or practice-based learning. First, if practice, and the learning that is part of that practice, is social, how can we identify an individual learner? Secondly, the practice is always local and context-dependent. Consequently, the learning-in-practice will be local and so unmeasurable against universal standards. Finally, learning-in-practice is transitory; always for the first time; always new. This creates problems for university award systems that recognise achievement of learning as a historic record. The learning that we do within one practice context will have to be redone in a new context. This, I think, is one of the points that both Bateson and Argyris and Schön were getting at with their ideas on double loop or deutero-learning.

Learning with Premier Engineering

I worked with Premier Engineering, a large manufacturer in the west midlands motor supply chain, over a two year period as part of the Premium Automotive Research and Development project¹. When I started I had little experience of consultancy or of the engineering sector of which Premier was a part. Additionally, I had not worked with Premier before and had little experience of the New Product Development (NPD) processes they used or of the problems that they might want me to help them overcome. I had much learning to do!

During these two years, I worked with colleagues² with the goal of supporting design engineers at Premier speed up the NPD process. By the end of the two years we had designed and developed an Integrative Workshop that helped the engineers manage the complex array of interdependent tasks that they had to do. The workshop has now become a standard part of Premier's NPD process and our investigations demonstrated that it had saved them many millions of pounds. This paper does not give space for a detailed account of my learning over that two year period. So I summarise the process of learning by identifying three domains of attention that gave rise to development in my professional practice. The three domains of attention were:

- An engagement with new ideas
- A practice of inquiry
- An attention to moment-by-moment relating.

It is significant, and a point to which we will return, that this identification of learning focuses on practices and process rather than historic achievement of lessons learnt. The learning that I undertook in working with Premier was not so much a process of storing knowledge or competences within me but a moment-by-moment awareness of what any situation was calling from me. Here again, the analogy of improvised jazz is helpful. The Jazz musician will practise an array of riffs and tunes but every performance will be new; his collaboration with colleagues in a band calling out of her new and different ways of playing those riffs. In the same way, our own actions within a work context will owe something to ways of working, or riffs, that we have practised over time. However, as Shotter and Katz (1996) point out, our actions will also be called out of us by other people's, preceding actions and the anticipation of future responses. It is as if we only own half of what we say or do. So, in looking at the process of learning, I am avoiding creating a typology of learning and instead, seeking to look at the activities and social processes that generated learning-in-practice.

1 This project was led by Warwick Manufacturing Group and financed by Advantage West Midlands.

2 I would want to acknowledge the contribution of my colleagues Joy Batchelor and Martina Eberle in the undertaking of this work.

Engagement with new ideas

Dewey (1938) described ideas as the anticipation of outcomes to action. They are not the same as theories in that they do not seek to describe or predict outcomes. In the same way as I worked with Premier I drew on a repertoire of ideas largely taken from social constructionist and discursive social theory. On one occasion, I was seeking out information on Neural Networks when I chanced upon the Cybernetic theory of Stafford Beer (1990). I had been thinking for a while about designing a workshop for Premier to help them manage the day-to-day problems of new product development and Beer's Team Syntegrity offered me many good ideas. A significant point that I would want to make here is that this was not a straightforward application of theory. Rather, as I engaged with Beer's argument and prescriptions I was able to use particular suggestions. On occasions, I consciously designed and facilitated these workshops in ways that went against Beer's thesis, but I found that many of his practices offered a poetic potential for my working. It was Beer's **words** that helped me notice new options pointed me towards new practices every bit as much as his concepts and arguments.

Practice of inquiry

Throughout the PARD project, my colleagues and I sought to gather evidence about whether our work was being influential and helpful. There were three phases of this inquiry. First, we sought to get a feel for what was going on in Premier's NPD processes. For a number of reasons, I used Discourse analytic methods to explore how Premier engineers spoke about their work. Later, I used methods from Grounded Theory to test the plausibility and acceptability of my emerging plans with colleagues at Warwick Manufacturing Group and Premier Engineering. Finally, we used an array of interviews, participant feedback, financial measures and reflective groups to assess how helpful the Integrative workshops had been.

In each case our concern was to build up evidence to support our next actions. Our inquiry was not seeking research data in the way that a researcher might do as they build robust, explanatory theory. Rather, this was a practice centred form of Action Research. The quality of our inquiry was to be found not in any accuracy of an account but in the robustness and sustainability of the managerial practice I and my colleagues developed (Ramsey, 2007).

Attending to moment-by-moment relating

Thus far, in this account of my learning, I have identified, perhaps, small changes of emphasis in academic practices that remain recognisable to most facilitators of work-based learning. Rather than applying theories, I have written of engaging with new ideas, often for their poetic affect on my actions as much as for their rational impact on my thinking and action. Rather than designing inquiry methods to achieve the most accurate

data possible, I emphasised changed practice as the outcome of inquiry. The third domain of attention, however, is unlikely to appear in any pedagogic literature outside social constructionist thinking. The importance of ongoing relations to learning has been emphasised by Wittgenstein (1953) and more recently in the development of a social poetics by Shotter and Cunliffe (Shotter, 1993; 1996; Shotter and Cunliffe, 2003; Cunliffe, 2004). A social poetics focuses our attention on the moment-by-moment ways that action is created in relational processes. For Shotter what we say and do moves, strikes and gestures us to turn our attention in particular ways. My response to Beer's work on team synteegrity would be an example of this.

Within the PARD project my ongoing relating with colleagues in Warwick Manufacturing Group and Premier Engineering restricted or promoted what I could do at different times. My learning to be a skilful actor within the project led me along a somewhat bumpy road. Progress and development were not straightforward as I misjudged the influence of colleagues, was unaware that certain issues were of vital importance to others and was surprised on occasion by positive responses to actions that I took. Returning to a social constructionist understanding of action always being a social performance, I had to learn how to attune my actions to ongoing relations within which I was working. It was not that my actions were determined by social relations but that I was learning to be a skilful performer of relating within those contexts. I was learning to improvise my actions in moment-by-moment joint performance with others.

As I increasingly sought to attend to my moment-by-moment involvement in conversations, I developed a concept of conversational trajectories (Ramsey, 2008) to help me notice how conversations were developing. I built this concept on Potter and Wetherell's (1987) work on discursive practices and Shotter's (1996) work on social poetics. Wittgenstein (1953) wrote of conversations having their own essence. We might say that conversations have a life of their own. Shotter (1995) argued that any conversation was the creation not of one or more person's intentions but of "shared intentionality". In listening for conversational trajectories I was seeking evidence as to where a conversation might be headed. I was interested in how certain discursive practices would tend to restrict or promote particular ways for the conversation to go on. An attention to conversational trajectories enabled me to pace my contributions to conversations and so helped me with my facilitation of the integrated workshops.

Recognising learning

So, how does my learning fit within Bateson’s learning framework? I offer one account in Figure 1.

Figure 1	
Learning I	The development of the Integrative Workshop would be an example of changed practice to improve performance.
Learning II	The development of the three domains of attention as a way of improving practice-in-learning might be an example of learning II.
Learning III	The development of conversational trajectories had been emerging in my thinking for a while before I started on the PARD project. This, however, was the first time that I had been able to explore its pragmatic worth within and organisational setting. Its value has had a significant effect on research work since then.

There are differences between the levels of learning that are of significant importance and practical difficulty in designing university award structures. My learning I was an historic achievement. My learning II again could be demonstrated as a series of changed habits, and so by requiring me to write a written, reflective report on the three domains of attention, that too can be rendered as an historic achievement. My learning III however, is significantly more difficult to render as an historic achievement. This is learning-in-process, an emergent, not yet finalised way of going on (Wittgenstein, 1953). Furthermore, as a practice it is virtually impossible to assess. As a concept, it is assessable. I have written an academic paper that shows the emergence of the concept from my reading and synthesis of a wide array of literatures. I have taken my inquiry at Premier to academic conferences and used it to illustrate the potential value of the concept. The problem lies, however, in how the conversational practice that I am developing might be assessed.

Earlier in this paper I suggested that practice, from a social constructionist perspective, is treated as social, transitory and context specific. Each of these features of practice renders it difficult to recognise and assess within award structures that are centred on historic achievement. It makes complete sense when assessing knowledge acquisition to provide recognition for the historic achievement of that acquisition. Similarly, in assessing competence to practise, when that competence is understood to be a possession of an individual, it makes sense to recognise learning as an historic achievement. Current university award structures; certificates, diplomas, bachelor’s and master’s degrees are adequate to the task.

The need for new award structures for work-based learning

My point here is that we have award structures in the university sector that are adequate for learning that can be categorised as an historic achievement. From my story, this is the LI and LII learning that I did. The problem lies in that the really interesting and life changing learning-in-practice that I did; the deuteron – or double loop learning is not assessable as learning-in-practice by as an historic achievement. It is an emergent, unfinalised (Bakhtin, 1984) and probably unfinalisable learning. I will take this learning and modify, develop and extend it every time that I'm involved in a conversation. When looking at LIII learning, we can only see that learning as a process rather than an achievement and university awards are inadequate to the task of recognising it.

The very best that we can currently do is provide award recognition that at a moment in time, an account of such learning has been received and accredited. But that is a poor recognition of high level learning-in-practice. Assessing learning-in-practice is difficult. From a practical point of view, we are still, largely reliant on accounts of practice for our instruments of assessment, but we can make one difference that reflects the transitory, social and local nature of practice and that is to develop award structures that reflect the processual, emergent and developmental nature of learning-in-practice. And that would be to design award structures that recognise learning-in-practice as an ongoing process that requires being updated, renewed and developed. Such award structures would give recognition to practice for a period of time, say two or three years but require students to resubmit evidence of ongoing learning for the credit for that learning to be re-established. In universities, we currently have a plethora of awards and degrees that recognise learning as an historic achievement. Work-based, learning-in-practice is genuine lifelong learning and it requires and deserves a different kind of lifelong, renewable award to match its nature. It is high time that the work-based learning community banded together to create and validate a genuine award that gives adequate recognition to lifelong learning-in-practice.

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Recognising and enhancing the quality of university work-based learning programmes

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Introduction

Although work-based learning is now a part of the UK higher education landscape it is increasingly being used as a blanket term for a wide range of learning activities related to employment (Connor, 2005). There is a real danger that the imprecise use of the term will devalue it and lead to confusion when considering issues of quality assurance and enhancement.

For the purposes of this discussion of quality work-based learning is considered as a learning process which focuses higher education level critical thinking upon work (paid or unpaid) in order to facilitate the recognition, acquisition and application of individual and collective knowledge, skills and abilities, to achieve specific outcomes of significance to the learner, their work and the higher education institution (Gibbs and Garnett, 2007). As such work-based learning has been described by Boud and Solomon (2001:1) as “one of the very few innovations related to the teaching and learning aspects of post-secondary education that is attempting to engage seriously with the economic, social and educational demands of our era”.

Work-based learning and quality assurance

The experience of Universities with a well established track record of review and validation, over ten to fifteen years in some cases, is that work-based learning can score very well in standard quality performance measures such as recruitment, retention, academic achievement and student satisfaction (Garnett et al, 2008).

University work-based learning programmes often draw heavily upon the educational philosophy and technologies of independent learning (Osborne et al, 1998). The high level of customisation to meet the needs of individual work-based learners fits well within the discourse of modernism which dominates quality assurance in higher education (Morley, 2003). In this respect, work-based learning and quality assurance in higher education can be seen as part of the same modernising discourse which privileges individualisation of provision of public services.

However, work-based learning can also be seen as a high risk activity in the context of an approach to quality assurance predicated upon the desirability of standardisation which: “... has deeply conservative underpinnings” (Morley, 2004:5). The drive to standardisation is embodied in subject benchmark statements which the QAA state:

...provide authoritative reference points, which students and other interested parties will expect both to be taken into account when programmes are designed and reviewed, and to be reflected, as appropriate, in programme specifications... (Jackson, 2002:154)

The benchmark statements are intended to:

...create a more explicit environment for learning by encouraging teaching teams and subject communities to set out what they believe are the main learning outcomes from programmes in a subject. (Jackson, 2002:140)

This is a challenge to the flexible work-based learning curriculum which is geared to the needs of individual learners in a wide range of demanding work contexts and also their employers. The positionality of a work-based learning student within a specific work context makes work-based learning very different from a subject discipline-based course delivered at a distance or a full-time University student "out" on a work placement. This essential difference should be at the core of the evaluation not only of any higher education curriculum for work-based learning but also the evaluation of university systems and structures for supporting work-based learning programmes.

Sharpening the focus of quality assurance to enhance work-based learning programmes

The distinctive features of University work-based learning stem from a partnership between an external organisation and an educational institution specifically established to foster learning (Boud and Solomon, 2001). Higher education is used to quality assurance of programmes offered in partnership and has developed instruments such as institutional visits, collaborative programme validation events and memoranda of co-operation to safeguard the quality of the award offered by the higher education institution and to provide a quality student learning experience. What higher education is not used to is partnering with organisations whose function is not primarily the provision of education. For such organisations the value of learning is in the ability of the individual or group to perform better and thus make the organisation more effective. In the commercial sphere this is ultimately measured in capacity to impact upon the bottom line. Stewart (1997) argues that in the new knowledge economy it is intellectual capital which is the true measure of the wealth of an organisation. According to Stewart intellectual capital resides in the people, structures and customers of an organisation. The importance attached to the concept of intellectual capital is indicative of a revolutionary shift from the company as a place of production to being a *...place for thinking*.

Garnett et al (2008) argue that work-based learning demands that higher education extend its concept of partnership beyond knowledge transfer to focus upon facilitation of knowledge in the workplace. Thus the focus of quality enhancement should be the extent to which University work-based learning programmes enhance the intellectual capital of employer organisations. Garnett et al (2008) draw upon knowledge management literature to argue that the key factors for such an evaluation of work-based learning should be the extent to which the programme focuses upon organisational objectives to ensure that the knowledge it develops has a performative edge. This is a significant extension of current quality assurance which focuses upon the individual learner. Such performative knowledge is likely to be expressed in terms of impact upon the systems, structures and procedures of the employer and thus contribute to what Stewart describes as the structural capital of the organisation. Such an approach to quality enhancement would recognise the existing structural capital of the workplace and seek to use it to support individual work-based learning programmes. This would be the primary focus of partnership negotiations and would be reflected in the content of quality assurance tools such as validation and memoranda of co-operation. The approach would focus upon the role of the partnership in knowledge recognition, creation, dissemination and use. A diagrammatic representation of such a partnership is given in Figure 1 below.

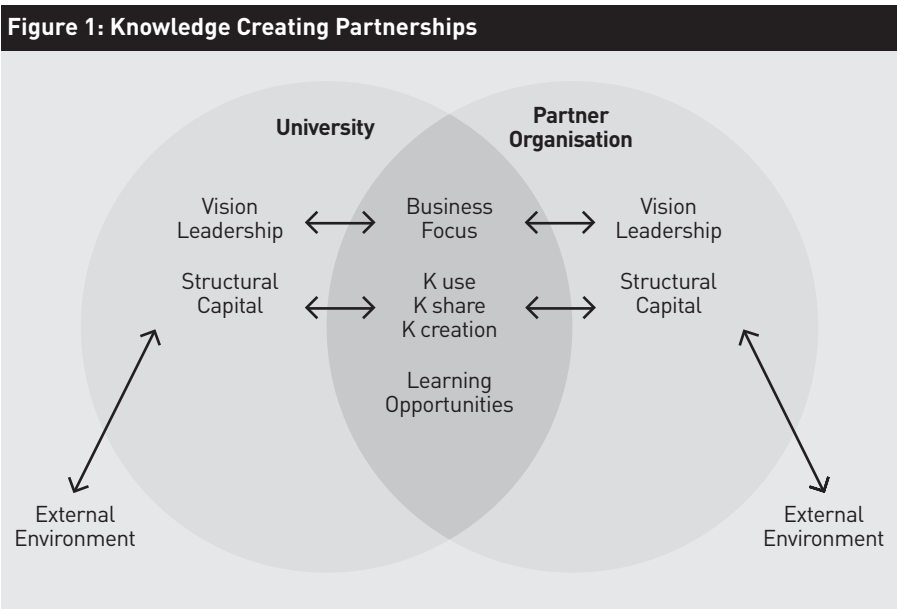


Figure 1 highlights the importance of the structural capital of both the University and the partner organisation for knowledge creation and use. To have maximum benefit to the partner organisation the work-based learning programme must be aligned to the business focus and structural capital of the partner organisation. To bring about such a partnership requires both the University and the partner to have significant leadership vision and awareness of the external environment.

Individual learners are employees or usually have some contractual relationship with the external partner organisation. In such cases work-based learning programmes are often the product of a three way negotiation between the individual learner, their employer and the University. Such negotiations and the use of learning agreements as quality assurance mechanisms are well established in higher education (see Garnett, 2000) but tend to focus upon the individual learner (see Osbourne et al, 1998) rather than organisational learning and the imperatives of performativity in the workplace. It is suggested that learning agreements be focused upon the development of intellectual capital. This theme could commence by turning the structured review and evaluation of current learning often incorporated into work-based learning as an Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) module into an exercise in knowledge creation by focusing upon the potential of reflection to make tacit knowledge more explicit (Garnett et al, 2004). Work-based learning projects that meet the needs of the learner and the organisation are a significant element of the higher education work-based learning programme (Garnett, 2005). The Middlesex experience of work-based learning has highlighted the high significance of some work-based learning projects to the stakeholder organisation; for example the implementation of a knowledge audit process within a SME manufacturing company; a study of school truancy which was negotiated with the London Metropolitan Police. The impact of projects can be considerable; for example an estimated £2,000,000 saving from improving the reporting process of construction defects to learn from mistakes and thus increase customer satisfaction and company profits. The design and conduct of projects could be enhanced to maximise the potential to impact upon the intellectual capital of the organisation. An important issue in such an approach would be the potential linkage between the work-based learning project and the organisational decision making processes. An intellectual capital approach suggests that the success of work-based learning is in large part dependent upon how far the University programme is responsive to the needs of work and can draw effectively from the work context.

Conclusion

The work-based learning focus upon the process of learning means it has the potential to perform well when measured within the established higher education quality assurance systems. Yet the current approach to quality assurance and enhancement is naturally focused upon the individual learner and the nature of their learning experience in the

context of the education provided by the higher education institution. This is an inadequate base to enhance the quality of provision which is genuinely work rather than university based! For work-based learning to be critically reviewed and enhanced it is suggested that an intellectual capital analysis of the fitness for purpose of higher education work-based learning provision be implemented. Such an analysis would focus not only upon the human capital being developed but also upon the extent to which university programmes and other university support services were effective as “structural capital” (Stewart, 1997; Garnett, 2007) to support knowledge recognition, creation, dissemination and use at, through and for the purposes of work.

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Work-based learning: learners and courses

Learning Stories: learner, tutor and external examiner perspectives on developing a personal research methodology for *Learning through Work*

Zöe Guenigault, Animi Training; **David Young**, University of Derby;
Maggie Challis, Skills for Care

... narrative is what we do. We use it to make sense of the world as we perceive and experience it and we use it to tell other people what we have discovered and about how the world, or more specifically aspects of it, are for us. Sikes & Gale (2006)

Introduction

This paper presents three different voices reflecting on the final study of a negotiated master's degree in work-based learning undertaken within the Learning through Work Scheme at the University of Derby. At the heart of the piece is the voice of Zöe, the learner whose methodological and presentational approaches to her work-based study are discussed here. A second voice is that of David, the tutor, and his reactions to the project as it developed from an idea to a plan, then through drafts and revisions to the work as submitted. A third voice is that of Maggie, the external examiner, who encountered the study for the first time in reading for an assessment board.

Together, they offer three perspectives on the approaches taken by Zöe, caught up in an externally imposed and rapidly evolving process of radical workplace restructuring, as she responded to and reflected on twelve months of professional change. The context for this change was a national organisation with a head office, regional management centres and a range of sub-contracted delivery outlets which was, at the time of the research, undergoing what was termed a "delivery chain review".

The detail of the project is not presented here. However, the benefits for both Zöe as an individual and her company in coming through a challenging process with more informed and developed understandings of future change and the management of individuals within such change processes are identified.

Zöe

The reason for choosing a project which was so personal and which has so many difficulties was for exactly those reasons. I wanted it to be real and not just theoretical; to be not only a challenge but to have a personal relevance.

David

Before Zöe came to discuss her work-based project with me, I'd been interested in narrative approaches to research for more than 20 years. I'd dabbled with this approach when I was a classroom teacher, producing a piece about school students and "found" poems for a

local journal (Young, 1985a). I'd included a chapter presenting a personal perspective on life in a classroom in my M.Ed. (Young, 1985b) and my Ph.D. (Young, 1990) has what might be termed "interchapters" which attempt to provide an alternative perspective on the situation under investigation by adopting an approach which owed something to new journalism and the non-fiction novel. I say "owed something to" because I certainly wouldn't want to make any great claims for these pieces as radical statements. Despite the fact that I loved Wolfe's (1968) non-fiction novel, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* and had read his 1973 manifesto on new journalism, I'd come to these works as a reader, rather than as a practitioner, as emphasised by the time which elapsed between reading and having a go myself.

When I did eventually try a narrative approach for myself, what I was trying to do was to provide a case-study insight into real events and opinions through verbal pictures recording the everyday details and nuances of a situation viewed through the eyes of particular characters involved. These pictures were not fiction; they maintained factual accuracy – even if a single picture drew on a number of different incidents. However, rather than argument or exposition, they used the dialogue of participants involved in the incidents described, and detailed descriptions of the situations, including room settings, to offer an alternative exposition of the scenarios under discussion.

Walker (1983), from the 1970s part of a network of researchers looking at new methods of classroom observational research, expressed a range of reservations about the case-study approach, including likening it to the image of ... *a cumbersome and primitive plate camera*. Nevertheless, he concluded that he would continue with the approach because he was attracted by the sense of potential it offered. I too found the approach stimulating and enjoyable and, while I didn't pursue this very far after concluding my own studies, I'd always told myself that I was "interested" in approaches to research which saw an actor's viewpoint as having equal currency – and, of course, the same susceptibility to bias, inaccuracy and partiality – as research designs which might be seen as more objective, valid or reliable.

Somekh (1995: 347) struck a chord with me with her emphasis that:

Action research reports are nearly always written in the first person. To do otherwise is difficult to defend methodologically. The practitioner researcher examines his or her own role, behaviour and relationships in a particular social situation as part of the investigation.

I also continued to graze among the increasing academic literature which uses first person narrative in writing about organisations and organisational behaviour. Such developments are neatly summarised by Boyle & Parry (2007), who: ... *propose that autoethnography has a fruitful contribution to make to organizational research, that: ... the introspective*

and retrospective nature of autoethnography can enhance understanding of the link between the individual and the organization very effectively, while being clear that: ... the extant literature can be weaved into the autoethnographic narrative.

I'd also briefly read Goodley et al (2004) and had suggested to Zöe that she might find it interesting. She did.

Zöe

Whilst undertaking my Research Methods module, a precursor to this larger and more substantial work, David, my tutor, lent me a book about researching life stories (Goodley et al, 2004). I was immediately hooked. These stories, all based on significant amounts of research and observation, made the projects come to life. I found I could empathise with and understand the research subject to a greater degree than, I suspect, if they had been written as traditional research reports. The stories were based in reality which gave them meaning and purpose. David also let me have a look at one of his own research projects. This had been written in a more traditional way, but with substantial elements of "story" (the "interchapters" referred to above). These two resources helped me to pinpoint how I wanted the finished research project to look. Although it may seem unorthodox to have started at the end, this helped me to begin deciding on the methods and methodology I would use to undertake the research and gave me a focus, which was invaluable throughout the project.

The Research Methods module developed my thinking and research skills, perhaps the most important element of which was the Method Map which I developed (see Figure 1). Using this as a tool, I started to make decisions about the ways I would go about the project and the ethos behind it. I chose the methodology and methods before beginning but, as the project developed, so did these. This project was organic, almost taking on a "life of its own", incorporating many different types of research in ways that are not distinctly separate. I feel that, as a whole, it gives a rounded viewpoint and uses methods appropriate to the range of situations featured.

My early reading focused on methodology. I purposely chose not to undertake critical reading of current management thinking whilst actually undertaking the research, although I was familiar with change management literature from previous studies in the MA programme. I wanted to ensure that I was viewing and reacting to the situation as I perceived it and was not being influenced by others' writing and/or theories. I did not want the project to be "tainted" by what I might be *expected* to see. Rather, I wanted to observe and attempt to reach my own conclusions, which I could then reflect and compare to current literature. This conscious decision enabled me to react more directly to the evolving work situation and, in the end, the management literature reviewed was more diverse as a result.

Methodology and Methods

I was very clear from the beginning about how I wished the project to be researched and what the end “product” would be like. What was less clear was how to fit this in with traditional methodologies and approaches to research. My eclectic mix of methodologies and methods may seem unplanned or with little thought given to them, however this could not be further from the truth. I have, on purpose, tried to think as widely as possible throughout the life of the project. I did not want to constrain my thinking or research. Because the workplace change I was investigating changed almost on a daily basis, I had only one chance to gather the information from each situation and I did not want to miss a thing.

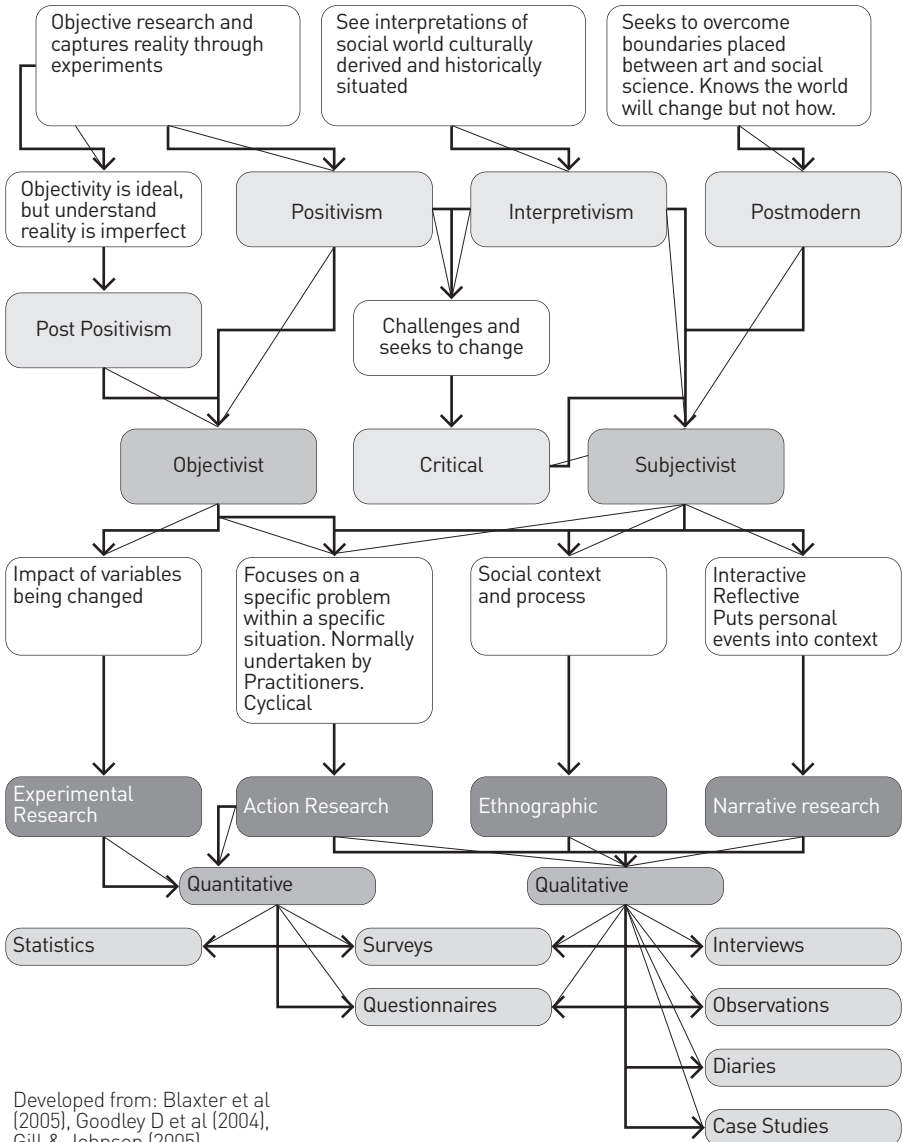
The investigation takes place in the workplace and no effort is made to “control” the research context or design an “experiment”. Somekh, 1995:341

I wanted to be interpretivist of the social context of the situations I was in. I wanted to be critical and challenge what was going on around me, happening to me and, above all else, I wanted to have a postmodern slant to enable learning from the experience and bring about future change.

While the other paradigms offer grand theories for understanding the social world, ‘advocates of postmodernism have argued that the era of big narrative and theories is over: locally, temporally and situationally limited narratives are now required’ (Flick, 2006:2). Postmodernist approaches seek to overcome the boundaries that are placed between art and social science. Blaxter et al, 2005:61

To further assist in the decision process and to clarify the choices available I used the Method Map mentioned earlier as an “aide-memoire” in the decision process. This is only a diagrammatic representation of the choices; it has not been designed to be in-depth and it recognises that there is considerable overlap between methodology, styles, strategies and techniques. Nevertheless, devising this diagram assisted in my own thought processes and, although stylised, I found it a useful way to be clear about the different methodologies and to plan my research approaches. Although they are a mixture, they lend themselves to the particular research I wanted to undertake into my workplace.

Figure 1: Method Map



Style and Approaches

The writing up of the project is a mixture of ethnographic research, action research and, to a lesser degree, narrative research. As Goodley et al (2004:56) suggest, ethnographic research views the researcher as integral to the culture and context they are researching:

Ethnography is an approach to research that involves immersion within, and investigation of, a culture or social world. Broadly speaking, researchers enter a given culture and draw upon a variety of methods in order to make sense of public and private, overt and elusive cultural meanings.

As previously stated, I wanted to be part of the developing professional situation and to reflect on that situation to see how it affected the people involved. Reflection on my own reactions and observations of others was key in this project. Although ethnography requires the researcher's immersion within a project, an action research approach also sees the researcher as being part of the project, something clearly expressed by Somekh (1995:340-1):

Action research methodology bridges the divide between research and practice ... is carried out by people directly concerned with the social situation that is being researched (and) has a highly pragmatic orientation.

While ethnography might be "immersed" it is not necessarily "personal", whereas action research starts from a personal perspective of those questioning their everyday situation. At the time of the study I was working for the company on which the research is focused and so there is a personal element of action research because I was directly concerned with and directly impacted by the situations under investigation. At the same time, there is a more detached perspective where the research involves looking out into the network to see how the change affected others in slightly different situations within my working environment.

The narrative element of the research is based upon this being a year-long case study, with myself as the key example.

The case study is, in many ways, ideally suited to the needs and resources of the small scale researcher. It allows, indeed endorses, a focus on just one example, or perhaps just two to three. Blaxter et al (2005:71)

As I planned to write the account of the research in an adapted story form based upon a limited social context (although informed by a wider one), narrative research fitted this well. An additional dimension was that I was not causing the change about which I wrote and therefore had little control over the situation. I hoped that reading the study might

help others to understand change situations. I underpinned the narrative parts of the account with reflection on current thinking in change management.

Action research is concerned with exploring the multiple determinants of actions, interactions and interpersonal relationships in unique context. Its aim is to deepen practitioners' understanding of the complex situations in which they live and work, so that their actions are better informed. Rather than specific "findings" or "outcomes", action research generates what Elliott (1991:52-53) calls "practical wisdom" and Dreyfus (1981) and Elliott (1993: 66-70) call "situational understanding". Somekh, (1995:341)

I used the three approaches discussed above to gather qualitative data for the study. There is little about the project that is quantitative. I chose to not gather wide scale views from other people affected by the change; I specifically wished it to concentrate on a small number of people in some detail. This was to enable me to get a real feel for the situation and reactions. However, where appropriate, I did give views from the wider community involved in the workplace change.

Techniques

The two main techniques chosen for the project were observations and diaries. Observations are far reaching and therefore not limited to the observation of people in meetings but also of letters, email communications, informal conversations / meetings, day-to-day working life and guidance produced by organisations concerned. My diary was used to log observations and also to record emotional reactions to situations, described by Somekh & Lewin (2005:25) as: ... *descriptive and interpretative sequences*.

Goodley et al (2004) imply that all ethnographic research is based on direct observation of the situation but I also employed indirect observation methods and as Gill and Johnson (2005:150) suggest, my intention was to: ... *gain access to data through indirect observation of an event not personally witnessed but which may be reported by an informant either orally or in writing*... In order to give the full picture of the complexity of the process, information was gathered from a variety of sources, both within and outside the company, who were involved in and affected by the re-structuring. This included professional groups and associations linked to the delivery chain and also the legal position, as determined by our solicitors.

Ethical Issues

This project obviously poses significant ethical issues. I consciously decided to not tell the people involved the intricate details of what I was doing. This decision was not taken lightly and was discussed in great length with my tutor and my manager. We felt that, in a sensitive situation it would be unfair to further burden people. Also, if I had chosen other methods of research, for example, interviews, I knew that not all staff would agree to participate.

However, this was not covert observation. Colleagues knew that I was undertaking a research project about the re-structuring process and could see me writing copious notes. As a researcher I was immersing myself in the research environment and taking a personal perspective. Choosing a “life story” method of writing the project makes clear that it presents my point of view and interpretations. Others involved are not identified.

I first attempted to use fictitious names, as suggested by Gill and Johnson, although, as they indicate (2005:160): ...*this may frequently prove to be difficult*... and it did prove to be very difficult! This was because the research focused on a small team, with defined roles, within which parties would be easily identifiable. Where I had permission from the people concerned I used names, but generally, in line with my ethical standpoint, I tried to avoid direct quotation from written communications and, instead, incorporated their tone and meaning into my writing.

This is a very personal account of a situation, the journey through it, the research undertaken as a result and the conclusions which came about from it. It was a difficult situation with tensions running high and trust issues becoming more apparent than in normal day working life. I wrote only from a personal perspective (although interpreting people’s views) and did not try to convey other viewpoints, opinions or stances.

Organising the project

The research was undertaken during period of change which caused me some difficulties. Whilst trying to grapple with a potentially life-changing situation I had tasked myself to collect emails and documents and to keep notes on every event, meeting and situation. This was difficult to say the least. Gill and Johnson (2005:166) suggest that, in a research approach such as mine:

An attempt is made by the researcher to understand his or her own effect upon, and role in, the research setting and to utilize this knowledge to elicit data.

Eliciting data was not a problem! Rather, the sheer amount of information I gathered throughout the process – over 1000 e-mails, 400 documents and numerous notes and diary entries – was an issue when coming to write up the report.

In an attempt to alleviate the problems associated with such large amounts of information and to help me write a clear and readable report, I kept a calendar of events during the research. Here, I recorded all data (diary entries, emails, documents, guidance, reports etc) in a diary structured database – with each day containing all the documentation associated with it. Once writing the report I made good use of technology by adding comments to the report – reminders, improvements, quotes and so on. This may sound organised, but it was more organised chaos, with much of the organisation done later, in moments of reflection. Hollway in Blaxter et al (2005:48-9) sums up the reality.

Quite early on, my notes became such a mess that I bought a loose-leaf binder, and divided it into sections.... Very soon the sections disappeared... it was impossible to separate "me" from "theoretical ideas" from "field notes". I gave up making notes separately on index cards while I was reading, because an idea from a quotation would spark off an idea about the significance of something I had experienced, and the note would develop into an analysis of that experience. I had endless talks with friends ... and would write notes on these afterwards if it was relevant. I called these my field notes.

My own research diary became very important, as this extract illustrates:

I found a great notebook today, which I am going to use as my research book and diary. The quote on the front from Proust, was very appropriate: "The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeing new landscapes but in having new eyes". I thought that this is how we should view the situation; looking at it differently and being positive ...

Project Report

The project report, titled *Re-inventing Our Company*, is presented in chronological order. The report identifies the main focus of both national and local company activities during the various stages of the re-structuring process.

This presentation of events in sequence is interspersed with extracts from my diary, written at the time, with personal reflections and critique from my position writing after the event together with reflection on both management and methodological literature. Using such a range of written forms supported:

... the process of reflection in which research data is used to inform an ever-deepening understanding of the complexities and richness of social interaction in groups. (Somekh, 1995:347)

To enable easy reading of the research report and its different elements I used the following formatting:

Format	Content
Plain text	Description of events in the change process.
Smaller font, indented	References to both methodological and management literature.
Different font (Lucida Handwriting)	Personal diary entries which are contemporary with events. I usually wrote these on the same day or at the end of the week.
Grey background	Current perspective – looking back and reflecting on the events.
Green background	Emotional phases and reactions.

The project report ends by articulating the lessons I learnt. My intention was to provide insight into change to help understanding and improve practice in the future. My organisation now has a different attitude to change; we deal with it more effectively. Learning from my research has enabled us to be more objective during subsequent change (admittedly less radical than that which I researched) and to consider it more carefully. It has informed future change and our management of individuals.

For me, I am now CEO of the company and have a high level qualification. I have developed emotional intelligence skills and undertaking the research helped me to be objective during the change process.

Maggie

Working as an external examiner for the Learning through Work programme is quite unlike any other external examining work. The concept of using a negotiated pathway, based on the learner's own work context places a range of demands on the university tutorial team, the university's learner management system, and the learners themselves.

The Scheme's two examiners review a wide range of submissions of projects, portfolios, learning contracts, and APL claims. Some are completed by cohorts, working to a set of outcomes developed collaboratively between employers and the university; others come from individual learners taking advantage of the flexibility of the system to re-engage with higher education after a break, or to take their first (often tentative) steps into higher level learning. Levels and volumes of learning also span the whole of higher education – from a few credits at level 4 to Master's dissertations. The key to reviewing the submissions

is to ensure that they have met the agreed learning outcomes, and have worked within the level indicators appropriate for their stage of study.

The work we review is always fascinating, often innovative, and consistently demonstrates a high level of commitment on the part of the learner, achieving consistency of quality and standards that would be the envy of other more traditionally delivered programmes. Then, every so often, we see a piece of work that stands out from the rest. One of these was Zöe's dissertation, *Re-inventing Our Company*.

I have worked to promote the use of work-based learning in higher education for the last 15 years. The notion of gaining academic credit for learning which takes place in a place and context other than the environs of the university campus has always seemed to me axiomatic. If learning is taking place, it should be possible to devise a way to quantify and assess that learning. Old frameworks and traditions in academia are not sufficient to meet this need.

This point is made by Boud (2001:34-35) and others:

The defining characteristic of work-based learning is that working and learning are coincident. Learning tasks are influenced by the nature of work and, in turn, work is influenced by the nature of the learning that occurs. The two are complementary. Learners are workers; workers are learners ... most work-related learning involved the development of knowledge of use in improving present practices or processes or in developing practices or processes for the future. It may even involve knowledge to be used to transform the organisation and lead it to new kinds of activity.

This scenario clearly applies to Zöe's dissertation. She is applying her knowledge of research methods to an organisational change which has a direct and significant impact on her organisation and on her own life. She has taken the line of sharing the "story" of a turbulent year in her life, and presenting it in a format that is engaging and, in the final analysis, academically rigorous.

However, even the most broad-minded examiner must feel a flutter of anxiety upon reading: "I purposely chose not to undertake critical reading of current thinking surrounding change management whilst undertaking the research". Surely this breaks all the methodological rules? How could we possibly consider a Masters level dissertation which seemed to do everything in reverse – deciding on the learning through the experiential process and **then** matching it to the literature? This was indeed an "eclectic mix of methodologies and methods". Viewing the product as one would normally approach a dissertation would clearly not do.

What was required here was to stand back from convention and go back to basics. In quality assurance terms, the work had to demonstrate parity with other postgraduate dissertations, even if it did not follow the more traditional format. We had to ask: does the work fit with the QAA level descriptors and the level indicators of the Learning through Work programme in respect of Master's level, and did the individual piece of work meet the negotiated learning outcomes for this piece of work?

These level indicators, referenced to the QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, indicate that Master's students should demonstrate ability in four domains:

- Field of study – to include systematic and critical engagement with, understanding of subject, field of study or area of practice
- Investigating practice – to include skills of independence and self-direction and techniques of research and enquiry and how they are used to create and interpret knowledge and/or practice
- Communicating – to include skills of presentation and organisation and an awareness of audience
- Applicability – to include reflection on and awareness of applicability of knowledge to problem solving in complex and unpredictable situations

My reading of the full dissertation made clear that Zöe had systematically recorded and analysed – at a personal and organisational level – the effects of restructuring on her own working life and that of her colleagues. Her “field of study” is ostensibly management, but it goes beyond this into a personal exploration of the significance of change on the individual. She is at one and the same time a participant observer, a leader and a “victim” of the changes taking place around her. She has worked independently and chosen a unique approach to defining her area of exploration, its relationship to existing knowledge of the field, and the way in which she presents her findings. She has reflected deeply and coherently on the applicability of her existing and emerging knowledge to solve problems in a situation which was not only “complex and unpredictable” but changing almost by the week. On this basis, there could be no doubt that Zöe had presented work at Master's level.

Endwords

David

It was October 9th. I was on the train, making a 70-mile journey which ended up taking nearly three hours. In Sheffield, as I changed trains, water poured through a hole in the station roof on to the electronic departures board, which fizzed but kept working. In my bag was the first complete draft of Zöe's dissertation. I hadn't heard from her for some months, since we'd agreed her methodological approach. As the train moved off, I started to read. I thought it would be interesting to see how she'd got on. It was.

Zöe

My research project deals with professional (and personal) life inside a radical process of workplace change. I would like it to provide insight into the process of change for others and perhaps to educate instigators of change on the effects of their actions on the people involved.

My decision not to undertake any reading of current literature during the actual change process has I feel, been vindicated and has improved the objective reporting of events. I was not constrained by current thinking nor was I looking for “what should be happening”. Instead I observed behaviour and emotion which subsequently proved to correspond with current literature. Moreover as I wrote the study after the event, I looked at a wider range of literature, stimulated by the issues / points of interest brought up by my investigation.

Maggie

There is, in my mind, no way in which Zöe’s work could fail to be seen to reach the required level of achievement. And, in addition, she has presented a dissertation which sets a tone and style which others could well emulate when trying to link the apparently conflicting domains of the academic and the workplace, the personal and the scholarly.

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“I seem to walk taller”: the impact of work-based learning and reflective practice upon Foundation degree graduates’ professional practice

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Abstract

The majority of practitioners working in the early years and school sector workforce are female (Kay, 2004), traditionally working in supportive roles as nursery nurses and teaching assistants. The research discussed is a three year study of Foundation degree women graduates’ experiences of an early years Foundation degree (2008). The graduates are experienced practitioners working in early years and school settings, studying part-time on an early years Foundation degree. An investigation of significant components of an early years Foundation degree programme identified the inter-relationship between work-based learning and reflective practice. A work-based reflective curriculum and a work-based learning teaching and assessment pedagogy enabled the graduates to redefine their sense of self through reflective thinking and behaviour, emerging as a unique reflective workforce, leading national policy and practice. The contribution of work-based learning and reflective practice upon the practitioners’ personal and professional development and professional practice in working with children, families and other professionals is discussed.

Background context

The research is placed within the context of the government’s agenda of workforce reform, developed over the last eighteen years. The Rumbold Report (DfES, 1990) found inequality of educational provision of three and four year olds, highlighting the need for a high quality of service for children. Similar findings in the Effective Provision of Pre-school Education Report (EPPE Project, Sylva et al, 2005) raised issues of quality of provision and influenced policy development. The government’s Every Child Matters agenda (DfES, 2003) introduced an integrated multi-professional service for children and families to achieve better learning and development outcomes for children. For this provision of service, both reports made a clear connection between practitioners’ qualifications and the level of service. They recommended opportunities for staff to enhance their qualifications as an essential factor to the quality of under-fives provision, improving the status of the service and the workforce within it (DfES, 1990). The Children’s Workforce Strategy (DfES, 2005) introduces the development of a graduate workforce through the introduction of the Early Years Professional Status professional award. These practitioners will lead professional practice of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. This new role will contribute to the emerging professionalism of the early years workforce, to raising the quality of service across the sector and to improving the skills and qualification levels of workers in all settings (DfES, 2005).

The introduction of BA (Hons) Early Childhood degrees in the 1990s provided an academic route for practitioners to achieve a degree. In 2000, the Foundation degree (Fd), as a new higher education award, introduced a vocational route in which work-based learning was at the centre of the award. Work-based learning integrated with academic learning develops students' academic knowledge and understanding, reinforcing and supporting the development of vocational skills (QAA, 2002).

Early Years Fd programmes provided a long awaited professional development opportunity for experienced practitioners working within children and young people in the early years and school workforce. Prior to the introduction of Foundation degrees, there was little opportunity for support staff to access continuing professional development, especially long term higher education programmes. The award contributes to the government's policy agenda of improving the skills, knowledge and understanding of the workforce. Foundation degrees need to be understood within lifelong learning and widening participation provision; they have a key role in providing educational opportunities for those who did not pursue higher education when leaving school (Lumsden, 2008).

Research context

The research discussed is a case study of the Fd Educare and Early Childhood. This was the first Fd developed and validated at the University of Derby and had the first cohort of Fd graduates at the university. Additionally, these graduates were one of the first cohorts to be awarded an Early Years Fd nationally. The programme was a collaboration between higher and further education. It was taught in six study centres, located at the university, in further education colleges and in a local authority school, the site of an employer-led Early Years centre. This range of study centres provided locally accessible higher education provision for the employed practitioners. The programme was delivered part-time, in the evening.

The research sample of sixty five women graduates of the Foundation degree in Educare and Early Childhood was representative of the predominately female early years and school workforce. Respondents were experienced women practitioners who had left school, attended further education colleges, had achieved their initial nursery nurse training diploma or NVQ qualification, and then had begun work, often working while bringing up a family. None of them had accessed any higher education before beginning their Fd programme. Seventy five percent of the graduates were in the thirty to fifty years age bracket. Seventy six percent had worked in the early years and school sectors between ten and thirty years, working as nursery nurses, teaching assistants or in related roles in a range of private, statutory and voluntary settings, representative of the work roles in the early years and school sectors.

Research findings

At the start of the Fd Educare and Early Childhood, respondents were in roles with limited responsibility, supporting other professionals – teachers, nursery and service managers – who held the responsible positions. At the end of the Fd, the graduates were confident practitioners leading professional practice within the government's new emerging policy and service for children and families. These women practitioners were emerging as a confident and articulate workforce, as this graduate's comment in her interview demonstrates:

"I seem to walk taller. I know what I am doing and am not afraid to say so."

Another graduate describes how other professionals view her and the knowledge she has gained through her Foundation degree studies.

"Staff now come and ask me things, as they know I've been to college."

This graduate now contributes to meetings:

"I now go to child protection meetings and give a report in the child's review."

These comments show some of the graduates' personal and professional development. Their vocational progression is demonstrated in their articulated confidence through their Fd Educare and Early Childhood studies. Such evidence raised questions about both the Fd as a distinct vocational award and the Educare and Early Childhood programme.

- What components of the Fd contributed to personal and professional development?
- What components of the Fd contributed to the graduates' professional practice?

These questions formed a starting point for investigation and developing an understanding of work-based learning and reflective practice in relation to professional practice.

The feminist research methodology used (Kitzinger, (2006) in Seale et al, 2007), was sympathetic to the sample group of women, enabling their experiences of the Fd Educare and Early Childhood to be made visible, by using narrative biographical research methods in which enabled the women to reflect upon their journey of progression through the Fd programme.

The graduates were asked to identify the most significant components of the Fd Educare and Early Childhood programme that contributed to their role as a practitioner. Table 1 shows their ranked responses.

Table 1: Foundation Degree components

Joint first	Achievement of the Foundation degree
Joint first	Reflecting and reflective practice
Second	Work-based learning
Third	Professional practice being valued

Their **achievement of the Fd as an award** was ranked highly, reflecting the women's newly found access to higher education and as a second chance of education. They were proud of their academic achievement.

An equally first rated component of the Fd was **reflecting and reflective practice. Work-based learning** was ranked second by the graduates. This raised further questions:

- Did this connect with the third ranked component, their professional practice being valued?
- Was there a connection between reflecting, reflective practice and work-based learning?

An investigation of the Fd in Educare and Early Childhood's curriculum design highlighted the importance of the work-based reflective pedagogy. The programme's curriculum used a work-based module design (Challis, 2006) in which work-based learning and reflection was embedded in the teaching, learning and assessment strategy as demonstrated in the learning outcomes and assessment activities. Reflection was a thread throughout the curriculum; each module had a learning outcome which focused on reflection. Students were asked to reflect upon an individual work-based activity, in order to modify and develop future practice, developing learning through their every day work activities. Two work-based core modules focused upon students' personal and professional development. The level 1 module enabled students to reflect upon their personal development in the work setting. At level 2, their professional career development within their work setting and organisation was the focus of their study. The learning outcomes were achieved through assessment activities within the students' everyday work activity; for example, a play project or practitioner-led research into an aspect of early years practice.

This work-based learning became the foundation of the programme's curriculum in which work contextualised learning was reflected upon and knowledge and understanding developed to further enhance professional practice with children, families and service users. This work contextualised learning was theoretically underpinned through engagement with academic literature, integrating work-based learning with academic learning (QAA, 2002).

This work-based learning curriculum is in contrast to the traditional undergraduate approach in which students are introduced to academic theories and subject specific topics first, which are then applied to practice. Foundation degree students use the curriculum content of their work activity to generate equivalent academic learning. This form of work-based learning is a powerful vehicle for individualised learning for practitioners. QAA in the Foundation degree qualification benchmark (2004) identifies work-based learning outcomes as being central to the design of a Foundation degree award.

Authentic and innovative work-based learning is an integral part of Foundation degrees and their design. It enables learners to take on appropriate role(s) within the workplace, giving them the opportunity to learn and apply the skills and knowledge they have acquired as an integrated element of the programme. It involves the development of high-level learning within the institution and the workplace. It should be a two-way process, where learning in one environment is applied in the other. Work-based learning requires the identification and achievement of defined and related learning outcomes.

A work-based curriculum is accessible to students who have not accessed higher education before, as the curriculum content is familiar to each student. Through individualised reflection, developing academic knowledge and understanding of their own work, their confidence grows personally and professionally, so that they: ... *seem to walk taller*.

The work-based learning was not confined to the work setting. A work-based pedagogy underpins delivery in the teaching sessions within each study centre. Examples of professional practice were brought from the work setting to the classroom for other students, who were practitioners to reflect upon, bringing a new perspective to the work activity carried out. This produced a reflective community of practitioners, who through dialogue reflected upon other practitioners' learning from professional and work practices, as this graduate's comment shows:

"We had time to reflect upon what we had done in the sessions; tutors asked us questions about our work."

A third contribution to this dialogue came from the work-based mentors within the students' work setting, who provided opportunities for work-based learning and supported each student in the work setting as a critical friend. Visits by tutors to the work setting provided a three-way dialogue about learning and progress between student, work-based mentor and student. This dialogue promoted a reflective approach to learning.

A cycle of reflective thinking and discussion supported the work-based learning outcomes in the Fd in Educare and Early Childhood. However, work-based learning should not be viewed in isolation. As Table 1 shows, a significant component of the programme is **reflecting and reflective practice**. The opportunity for students to question and reflect upon their work practices through dialogue with other student practitioners, work-based mentors and tutors enabled them to review and modify their professional practice. Reflective practice is a change agent for improving the service practitioners provide for children and families. Paige-Smith and Craft (2008) point out the emerging importance of reflective practitioners within the early years for implementing workforce reform and government policy. Graduates participating in the research clearly understood the inter-relationship between work-based learning and reflective practice, giving examples of work-based assessment activity that had significantly impacted upon their professional practice with parents and children. One graduate described how the module in Creativity and the work-based project she carried out had altered her approach to working creatively with children. Other examples given were of change in professional practice, resulting in sustained implementation within the setting.

The thread of reflection throughout the Fd Educare and Early Childhood programme's curriculum contributed to the graduates' developed confidence, while their engagement with academic knowledge provided a sound knowledge base for the reflective process to take place. This newly found confidence was articulated within the work setting in a range of professional practice contexts. Graduates were confident to contribute in meetings, mentor staff, lead staff teams and implement change. Table 1 shows that, at the end of their studies, when considering what the programme had contributed to their role as a practitioner, graduates ranked third that **their professional practice was valued**. Work-based reflection had contributed to this perception of their work.

In Rodd's (2006) view, growing self esteem and confidence are important attributes for early childhood leaders. The current government agenda in the Children's Workforce Strategy (2005) promotes the development of a graduate workforce who will lead settings and be change agents. Vocationally focused Foundation degrees equip learners with the skills and knowledge relevant to their employment and to the needs of employers (QAA, 2002). Foundation degrees contribute significantly to the development of this leadership workforce.

Conclusion

Foundation degrees are the main focus for work-based higher education qualifications (DES, 2003). Since their introduction in 2000, there has been significant growth in provision. By 2004 there were over 24,000 students enrolled on over 800 Foundation degrees, including early years Foundation degrees (Braham and Pickering, 2007). The uniqueness of the Fd Educare and Early Childhood as a vocationally located work-based award has been discussed in this case study. Work-based learning was developed as a pedagogy for learning through real work contexts and the development of a reflective practitioner (Schön, 1987) recognising the value of learning from every day work activity for a higher learning.

The research discussed shows the close relationship between work-based learning and reflective practice. Through a work-based reflective embedded curriculum and teaching, learning and assessment pedagogy, practitioners developed confidence, articulated new knowledge and redefined existing knowledge which impacted upon their professional practice, improving the quality of service for children and families.

Through early years Foundation degrees, a unique workforce of reflective women practitioners is emerging, who are leading government policy and practice – for example through the multi-professional approach within the Every Child Matters (2003) agenda. Early years Foundation degrees designed with work-based reflective components contribute to the development of a reflective, knowledgeable and skilled early years and school workforce. These practitioners have vocationally relevant knowledge and skills to meet the emerging needs of employers and provide a passport for future employment. Foundation degree graduates with current and relevant vocational knowledge, skills and attributes engage in reflective dialogue with professionals, parents and children. This way of reflectively thinking and behaving, brings about change, improves professional practice and is contributing to raising the status of the early years and school workforce.

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Facilitating high-achievers to tell their stories of professional entrepreneurialism: lessons from the Doctorate in Psychotherapy by Public Works

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Abstract

The Doctorate in Psychotherapy by Public Works, a Middlesex University and Metanoia Institute joint programme, was launched in 2007 in response to demand from senior and accomplished practitioners in the fields of psychotherapy, counselling and psychology for a route to doctoral recognition of substantial contributions to therapeutic practice. The therapy professions are by nature complex, insecure, constantly changing and have, until recently, provided little formal post-doctoral structure or coherent continuing professional development (CPD). The number and quality of applications to the programme evidences a felt need among such senior professionals for the opportunity to audit their achievements; candidates report that they greatly value being supported to find their “voice” and tell their story.

We describe how the programme team has developed the existing Middlesex D.Prof model of a public works doctorate to enable these practitioners to tell their story. Academic advisers have been struck by misconceptions (from a professional doctorate perspective) of academic value. Candidates entering the programme generally hold restrictive views of what constitutes original contribution to knowledge and so it has been important to find ways to encourage these highly-successful professionals to “re-story” their achievements. All demonstrate skills and outlooks characteristic of the entrepreneur and have considerably advanced in the entrepreneurial life cycle (Leadbeater, 1997). The programme team has found it necessary to draw on disciplines including work-based learning and industrial sociology alongside psychotherapy, (including narrative therapy), to enable candidates to understand, organise and present a full picture of their achievements. We draw on “case” material to illustrate how the team has found methods of synthesising these different ways of conceptualising “achievement” congruent with the “therapeutic entrepreneur” status of the doctoral candidates. They also suggest implications of their experience for our understanding of “achievement” in the context of work-based learning.

Introduction

This paper is based on and extends the position paper given by Dr. Simon du Plock and Professor Derek Portwood at the second Work-based Learning Futures Conference in May 2008. As Head of Post-Qualification Doctorates Department at Metanoia Institute, Simon collaborated with Derek and Professor Paul Barber to develop a variant of the Middlesex Doctorate by Public Works to meet the needs of senior qualified psychotherapists, counsellors and psychologists. Derek has pioneered work-based learning at higher education level in the UK. Paul is a member of Metanoia Institute core faculty.

We are mindful in reporting on the development of the D.Psych by Public Works of the ethical responsibilities of “insider researchers” – researchers who undertake research in their own organisations (Costley & Gibbs, 2006). We have decided, given the relatively small numbers of candidates and their high profiles within the world of psychotherapy, to present brief and anonymised illustrations of issues and dilemmas experienced by candidates. These illustrations are intended to be indicative of general themes.

We (Simon and Derek) chose to take the opportunity of the conference to give a position paper rather than a fully worked-up presentation because we wanted to adopt an interactive seminar style to optimise our engagement with colleagues and share with them our experience of developing ways for senior therapy professionals to audit their achievements. For us, the conference was timely, since it provided an opportunity for the programme team as a whole to reflect on the experience of working with the first nine candidates over the initial six months since their entry to the programme. This is the period of intensive orientation to the culture of the programme during which candidates prepare for registration for the doctoral award.

Writing now, a further three months into the life of the programme, it is possible also for us (Simon and Paul) to reflect on the process of registration and the period during which candidates prepare for final submission for the award. In doing so we hope to share a sense of the steep learning curve which both team members and candidates have experienced, and to convey some initial insights regarding how high-achievers can be best supported to tell their stories.

The Pedagogical Context

The Doctorate in Psychotherapy by Professional Studies (D.Psych) was first validated in 1998 as a joint programme offered by Metanoia Institute and Middlesex University through the National Centre for Work Based Learning Partnerships, now the Institute of Work Based Learning (IWBL). Over the past decade the programme has flourished and currently has approximately 40 graduates who have made considerable contributions to practice in psychotherapy and related fields. The programme team has been successful in developing a scholarly community within which these graduates and the candidate body (currently comprising approximately 70 researchers) are able to network and disseminate their work.

While the D.Psych has attracted a stream of mid-career professionals who matched our target market, the programme team became increasingly aware of the appearance at briefing sessions of very senior therapists, often in the latter stages of their career and with strong research track records, who did not hold a doctorate. It was clear that undertaking a minimum of three years of doctoral research to obtain such an award was not an attractive, or indeed relevant, option for practitioners holding key clinical posts. Moreover, the majority of these individuals functioned at CEO or higher management

level and so already evidenced the “excellent practitioner” qualities which the D.Psych was designed to promote in candidates.

While it might initially seem surprising that individuals were (and are) able to reach such key positions without a doctorate, it should be remembered that psychotherapy, counselling and even psychology, like other “helping professions”, have only recently obtained professional status. They are by nature complex, insecure, constantly changing and, consequently, the routes individuals have taken through the kaleidoscope of available trainings and professional validations have been idiosyncratic.

Relative lack of uniform structures have, paradoxically, provided opportunities for resourceful practitioners to achieve positions (both by acquiring them and creating them) which would not have been possible in a more formally-regulated environment. How the introduction of the Health Professions Council and increasing emphasis on evidence-based practice will impact on this situation remains to be seen.

It became clear to the programme team, in discussion with these senior practitioners, that what they sought was an opportunity to undertake an audit of existing achievements, rather than supervision to undertake new projects. We were interested to note that while these practitioners had often made significant contributions to the literature in their specialist area, they had not chosen to pursue the PhD by Publications route.

Given our awareness of the demand for an award which would acknowledge major existing achievement, we naturally looked to the Middlesex D.Prof since this appeared to provide a suitable vehicle for this group. Metanoia Institute was successful in negotiating with Middlesex University in its bid to offer the award of D.Psych by Public Works and M.Prof by Public Works, as counterparts to the University’s D.Prof/M.Prof programme. The new awards were designed on the same principles as the Middlesex University D.Prof/M.Prof by Public Works and are assessed by the same criteria as the existing Metanoia Institute and Middlesex University D.Psych/M.Prof awards.

From a Doctorate by Professional Studies to a Doctorate by Public Works

The Metanoia team found that the philosophy of the D.Psych provided an ideal platform from which to introduce variations to the generic D.Prof/M.Prof format in order to reflect the needs of senior therapists. That it provides such a platform is due to its distinctiveness among psychotherapy doctorates. The philosophy at the heart of the D.Psych is the belief that professional practitioners should seek continuously to update and expand their application of theory, to evaluate their own practice and to critique their own assumptions with particular attention to current developments and research outcomes in the field. This work is not undertaken in isolation (as it is typically in the traditional PhD) but in regular collaboration with other interested parties. Candidates are required to produce a

“Final Product” – essentially a research and development enterprise as opposed to a research-based thesis. The doctoral programme encourages practice-based evidence in research. Successful candidates are expected to evidence:

1. Professional experience developed continuously through active and effective engagement with individuals and groups of clients in a wide range of contexts;
2. Forms of research resulting in “products” of demonstrable interest and usefulness to practitioners;
3. Leadership qualities and skills whereby professionals are able to set up training, consultancy and organisations dedicated to psychotherapy provision.

This focus promotes an ethos of research needing to be useful and active in the world, making a difference and positively influencing the systems in which we work and live.

The D.Psych is therefore designed not only to support candidates on a research journey which enables them to gain a D-level qualification; the programme team foster a personal and professional development journey which enables practitioners to situate themselves at the centre of their professional work to date, and to identify as “excellent practitioners”. The team define the excellent practitioner as one who strives constantly to update and expand application of theory to practice, critiques their own assumptions with particular attention to current developments in the field, and makes useful contributions to practice and knowledge via research.

Programme publicity emphasizes it aims to nurture the mid-career professional. Many applicants are attracted by this ethos, and many graduates report that while they valued obtaining a doctorate they were particularly glad to do so in an environment which promoted personal and professional development.

Candidates are launched into this development work by undertaking a formal Review of Personal and Professional Learning, or RPPL, in which they review and critically reflect on the links between their past experiences, current position and future intentions on their doctoral journey. Such a reflection and the sense of agency which candidates obtain, parallels a therapeutic process in which clients may reflect and re-story. Explicit in this process is an understanding of the “excellent practitioner” as professional “mover and shaker” in their field.

The programme team have found it helpful to conceptualise the new Doctorate by Public Works as a vast RPPL. Our experience is that in the course of their journey through the D.Psych candidates increasingly re-story themselves as professionals who can, and actually via their Final Products do, make a difference to the way psychological therapies are

conceived and delivered. The Doctorate by Public Works shares this focus on professional experience, products and leadership. It differs, though, in that candidates do not undertake new research to evidence these. Public Works candidates have already made a substantial contribution to psychological therapy through a range of publications and/or public works such as setting up and running a psychotherapy or counselling service, generating and applying policy documents, strategy plans, major organisational change, innovative and successful training programmes etc, which have been pivotal in the field and commended, reviewed and respected by peers. The challenge to these candidates is to make and substantiate a claim for the doctoral status of completed projects which are in the public domain and can be shown to have had significant impact on the field of therapy.

Professional Entrepreneurialism

It quickly became apparent to us that those therapists who approached us, interested to become candidates on the Doctorate in Psychotherapy by Public Works were, while quite distinct in many ways, united by their entrepreneurialism. This entrepreneurialism was, moreover, of a particular type which we came to conceptualise as “professional entrepreneurialism”. Entrepreneurialism, per se, is not a concept much met with in the psychotherapy literature. In its most frequent usage it seems to denote profit-driven individualism – a far cry from attending to the psychological needs of our fellow human beings. Notions of “social entrepreneurship” which have emerged recently in the US and Britain appear less individualistic:

Entrepreneurship is the process of doing something new for the purpose of creating wealth for the individual and adding value to society. (Kao, 2006:69)

Kelly (1993), an American writer, uses the term “social entrepreneurship” to describe conventional businesses that incorporate social or ethical aims into their mission and objectives. Roper & Cheney (2005) provide a useful critical perspective on the term.

Leadbeater (1997:53), perhaps the most influential UK author in this field, conceptualises social entrepreneurs as:

Entrepreneurial: they take under-utilized, discarded resources and spot ways of using them to satisfy unmet needs;

Innovative: they create new services and products, new ways of dealing with problems, often by bringing together approaches that have traditionally been kept separate;

Transformatory: they transform the institutions they are in charge of... Most importantly, they can transform the neighbourhoods and communities they serve by opening up possibilities for self-development.

It was immediately obvious to the programme team that successful applicants were presenting completed projects which evidenced their ability to be entrepreneurial, innovative and transformatory in Leadbeater's terms. Their projects mobilised often discarded resources – both human and physical – to engage with intractable social problems. They were both entrepreneurial and innovative in identifying and satisfying unmet needs. Our awareness of this characteristic of applicants may have been assisted by the fact that the culture of the Metanoia Institute itself is one of entrepreneurship, given the founding and early development of the Institute by a small group of charismatic, innovative leaders.

Leadbeater (1997:51) proposes an entrepreneurial life cycle which is particularly relevant for making sense of the needs and aspirations of our Public Works candidates:

Successful social entrepreneurs create a cycle of development that goes through several stages. Social entrepreneurs start with an endowment of social capital in the form of a network of contacts and supporters. This gives them access to physical and financial capital, which they can use to develop the organization. The next step is the recruitment of further key people (human capital) to allow the organization to expand. If this phase is successful the organization can enjoy strong growth with the creation of a string of new products and services as well as an infrastructure of buildings. This infrastructure becomes the social dividend of the process and the basis for a further phase of investment.

Our applicants were considerably advanced in this entrepreneurial life cycle – in fact they had generally gone round this cycle several times in the process of developing successive public works. A crucial difference between them and Leadbeater's social entrepreneurs, however, was that they did not consciously identify themselves as entrepreneurs. Two further differences seemed significant: they identified as both professional therapists and organisational leaders; they were more concerned about social change than personal wealth. It seemed to us that this group could accurately be described as "professional entrepreneurs", since essentially, they were acting as entrepreneurs within the therapy professions.

The Relational Interface

Advising-cum-supervising such doctoral candidates offers a unique challenge. These are individuals at the top of their profession, psychotherapists with a wealth of "unconscious competence" who have embodied their trade, whose blind-spots often include the best of them – as their professional learning is embodied to the degree it is intuitively integrated within all they do. Practitioners at this level need a special kind of encouragement, plus extra support to face again the "conscious incompetence" entry on the programme awakens. Because they have such a rich store of experiential wisdom, the challenge to put the non-

verbal into words and bring the unconscious to light become primary aims of the supervisory relationship.

Candidates entering the programme generally held restrictive views of original contribution to knowledge, views which privileged traditional academic “products” such as books and journal articles, and which largely ignored evidence of their impact on their specialist field.

Laura, for instance, came to the programme riding upon the achievement of a single book, but oblivious to the international consultancy and change agency she had fostered in her career. The book, a more traditional academic product was foremost to her mind, yet, in dialogue, this paled into insignificance as the hands-on building of international relationships, political impact and founding of training organisations in foreign climes began to surface.

Anne, a leader in child psychotherapy, came to interview emphasising her authorship of a major text book. Yet, in discussion with the team, it emerged that her real passion was a series of short picture books designed to be read by children experiencing psychological difficulties. In these, and in other cases, the traditional academic artefacts conveyed only part of the story of what made these people and their contribution so special. The programme team quickly learned that it was important to encourage candidates to re-story themselves in a way which did greater justice to their core passion. Passion was not only permissible; it was essential.

As for the deeper psychology, the programme team gained a sense that these high achievers often either forget to celebrate their gains before they move on to the next thing or they fail to integrate or internalise their success. They are not so much driven as eager to create, and enthusiastic, in the manner of artists following their muse. In this light, the service the Doctorate by Public Work provides to them in personal growth terms is immense: nothing short of reviewing and re-constellating the whole of their personal and professional lives, while reviewing the meaning of their life to date. Hindu mystics talk of the need for us to find our dharma or life’s purpose, the activity that makes our heart sing. High achievers are well upon this road.

Similar to those identified by Maslow (1967) as self actualisers, participants in the Doctorate by Public Works tend to demonstrate an ability to perceive reality efficiently; to tolerate uncertainty; to accept themselves and others for what they are; to be spontaneous in thought and behaviour; to maintain a good sense of humour; to be problem-centred rather than self-centred; to be highly creative; to be resistive to enculturation but not purposely unconventional; to demonstrate concern for the welfare of mankind; to be deeply appreciative of the basic experiences of life; to establish deep satisfying relationships; to look at life philosophically and objectively. Simply, alongside expert professional psychotherapeutic skills, they have also inculcated sound interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. This should

not surprise us as these are also psychotherapy aims, and these individuals have usually experienced life-long therapy.

Our relationship with others and with ourselves is constantly monitored in psychotherapy, where supervision of the therapeutic relationship and our own psychological process is on-going. In a professional climate where our relationship with ourselves and our clients is subject to examination, it is little wonder development of “the person” occurs, the more so when the quality of our “presence” is core to professional practice. Add to the above the qualities of insight, intuition and empathy associated with therapists of excellence, and we begin to glean something of the nature of the programme’s clientele.

As may be imagined, supervision of recruits of this calibre set a real challenge for the programme team. Given their highly-attuned alertness to detecting bad faith and “psychobabble” in their clients, and their commitment to their own personal development, it is necessary for the supervisor to strive at all times to be genuinely present and as authentic as possible. These candidates can be alarmingly honest, transparent with their feelings, sharing of their innermost processes, while inquiring of your own. They will not usually play a conventional tutor-student game, but rather test you to the degree they test themselves. Simply they are less shackled by chains of the conventional social world and less amenable to the status quo and the world as it is culturally taught to be. They demand your respect and respect you in turn. They are also busy people whose time is too precious to waste, and as quick learners expect you to get to the point and to pull no punches. Besides expecting the supervisor to be able to meet them where they are, with similar degrees of empathy, insight and clarity, they expect high levels of challenge. They have grown and developed professionally through challenge and have opted for the Doctorate in Public Works in search of one more mountain to climb.

But challenge alone is insufficient, for although they know themselves and readily share their emotional world, the unconscious competence they have professionally forged paradoxically leaves them unpractised at dealing with the feelings of incompetence and shame – things academia all too often re-stimulates. For instance, many have had unconventional educations and trodden a counter-cultural path, largely because they felt at odds with the systems of social control education evokes. A return to academia, in this light, is often one of completing unfinished business, the last great challenge left for them to rise to. For this they need genuine support to face whatever academic demons haunt their past and deeply hidden incompetence all over again, plus more of the same to contact and journey through phases of unconscious incompetence towards conscious incompetence.

So here we have the inkling of a model emerging of how best to motivate high achievers: high levels of support and challenge underpinned by relational authenticity. If we place these observations into a model of intervention analysis, such as the one described below (after Heron, 1986) the following profile results:

A model of intervention analysis		
Prescriptive	+ 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 - (Define tasks & prescribe behavioural objectives)	Non-Prescriptive
Informative	+ 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 - (Inform & attribute meaning)	Non-Informative
Confronting	+ 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 - (Raise awareness & challenge blind-spots)	Non-Confronting
Cathartic	+ 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 - (Raise & express emotion)	Non-Cathartic
Catalytic	+ 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 - (Form boundaries & rules)	Un-Catalytic
Supportive	+ 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 - (Express our true self & values)	Non-Supportive

The above schema offers us a conceptual framework for mapping interpersonal relationships and profiling the range and nature of interactions available. "Intervention", within this perspective, is defined as a verbal or non-verbal behaviour offered in service to a client, designed to address their current psychological needs and chosen to serve their best interests. As for how this schema arose, Heron (1989), after an exhaustive review, concluded there were six categories of intervention which fuelled two styles of facilitation – "authoritative" and "facilitative". In the authoritative style a facilitator is largely task-centred and primarily gives advice (prescribes), instructs and interprets (informs), challenges and gives direct feedback (confronts); while in the facilitative mode they are more person-centred and work to release emotional tension (cathartic), promote self-directed problem solving (catalytic) and to approve and affirm the worth of a client (supportive). In character, the "authoritative style" speaks largely from a position of power, is task driven and has a tendency to be facilitator-centred in the style of mentorship and prescriptive coaching. By contrast the "facilitative style" is client-centred and attends primarily to the emergent process of others. Both styles must be harnessed together if we are to address something approaching holistic facilitation. All these interventions are helpful; all are necessary.

Concluding Reflection

The development of the Doctorate in Psychotherapy by Public Works has provided the programme team with some interesting challenges and an impetus to reflect on ways of conceptualising how we can most effectively facilitate these candidates in their journey through the programme. Clearly, given the relatively recent launch of this doctorate, this work is only in its initial stages. It is, though, already evident that we have been able to identify ways of conceptualising the challenges posed by this doctorate (both for supervisors and candidates) which make explicit themes which were only tangential or implicit in our work with candidates on the Doctorate in Psychotherapy by Professional Studies.

When we reflected on what we were asking candidates to do on the programme, we quickly realised that we were asking them to tell a story about what made them special and enabled them to make a profound impact on their specialist field in a way that other practitioners had not. It was helpful for the programme team to make use of the language of entrepreneurialism, and to conceptualise these candidates as *professional* entrepreneurs. We found that, without exception, our candidates were able to recognise themselves in this concept, and were able to use it to think about their achievements in creative ways.

Re-storying, a process most often discussed in the context of narrative therapy, was supported by supervisors working at a level of relational depth. The challenge of the new doctorate led us to reflect on styles of facilitation. Monitoring the tutorial relationship with participants of the Practitioner Doctorate appears to require more *directive*, *prescriptive* and *cathartic* interventions, while those upon the Doctorate by Public Works seem to solicit more *confronting*, *catalytic* and *disclosing* interventions. Perhaps this is because the former are more often than not in a conscious incompetence position, while the latter in the unconscious competence zone. Whatever the dynamic our Practitioner Doctorate learners seem happy to keep us in role as professional parents, while our Public Work candidates require us to walk alongside them as critical friends; simply, we are required to be more facilitative in our approach – hence the title of this paper.

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Beyond Boundaries: valuing and assessing experiential learning outside module templates

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Introduction

This paper arose from an action research project which sought to develop criteria for assessing credit volumes of experiential learning claims. The project explored the undergraduate module in Accreditation of Experiential Learning (APEL) within the Middlesex University Work Based Learning (WBL) programme and aimed to uncover the tacit knowledge of experienced accreditation assessors when assessing credit volumes. APEL is often claimed against specific validated University modules of which the credit level and volume is pre-determined, and then the credit awarded enables entry to, or progression within standard higher education programmes. Within WBL at Middlesex University (MU), students start with an APEL claim which represents their personal learning, and from there the rest of their programme is devised and negotiated. WBL already had criteria from which to assess academic level, but assessment criteria used to determine credit volume had not yet been developed. So, to promote transparency of assessment and maximise the outcome of APEL claims, this project aimed to identify criteria to make the assessment process more effective. Current APEL practice elsewhere in the UK does not always recognise all the learning that is brought in from the students' paid and unpaid work, thereby potentially undervaluing students' full experiential learning. Additionally, APEL claims are not always perceived as equivalent to traditional HE subject knowledge, even though the claim may represent significant learning for the individual learner, and consequently there are tensions between the value of learning generated by work and that which is taught in higher education. This paper will outline the current practice of APEL as practised at MU in WBL, and identify the criteria that were generated from the tacit knowledge of APEL assessors. It will then discuss the criteria in relation to the values that have emerged.

Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning

Merrifield et al (2000:1) define APEL as:

The accreditation of prior experiential learning, that is, the award of credit for learning based on prior experience — from work, community or volunteer experience — which has not previously been assessed and/or awarded credit. By converting informal learning into certificated learning, APEL provides cost-effective routes to qualifications. It has potential significance for people who, through life and work experience, have learned knowledge, skills and analytical abilities that are comparable to those in a higher education award. APEL offers the possibility for what learners know to be recognised, assessed with the same rigour as any other learning would be at HE level, and awarded credit.

This definition identifies APEL's position within higher education as a way to recognise experiential learning at higher education level, thereby giving it status within academia and demonstrating that learning from experience has currency which can be recognised as part of a programme of university level learning and recognises such knowledge, skills and capability as being comparable with other higher education learning. Prince (2004) suggests that using specific assessment criteria formally to recognise informal learning accreditation measures outputs rather than inputs, although recognising learning by output or outcome is not always acknowledged in traditional academic programmes where the indicative content and skills to be mastered relies on the syllabus generated by an elite academic community. This is perceived as being essential to those entering the discipline, rather than the knowledge which may be actually learnt by the student. Formal assessment strategies often require the reproduction of facts and information by the student through formal higher education assessment processes as in exams or coursework. Conversely APEL ranges across a wide diversification of knowledge content, skills, processes, and performance outcomes as learnt by the student through a variety of media, sometimes referred to, and including, the "University of life", and is usually assessed by the compilation of a portfolio supported by evidence. Additionally it indicates that there are quality assurance measures inherent within the accreditation process in order to assure comparability with traditionally assessed higher education knowledge within taught programmes. Current views on APEL suggest that it is an underused tool, which can be effective in extending higher education to new kinds of students and innovative learning partnerships, even though universities differ significantly in their approach to and adoption of APEL (Merrifield et al, 2000).

APEL is recognised quite widely for entry to higher education, and in some cases provides advanced standing against a given university level award, thus providing the opportunity to shorten formal programmes of study where prior learning is counted as significant. At MU the APEL module is located within the subject area of WBL, and is used within a range of undergraduate and postgraduate WBL programmes (Garnett, 1998). Accreditation of learning from outside MU is allowed up to two thirds (66%) of an academic award, depending on programme requirements or on core modules which may limit the amount of APEL that can be used.

Measuring APEL

The inherent features of APEL are academic recognition and assessment of experiential learning. The measurement activities within the assessment process relate to two key factors: the volume of credit and the level of difficulty, which reflect academic level equivalence to undergraduate or postgraduate learning. The MU WBL programme allows students to construct their own undergraduate or postgraduate programme beginning with recognising and accrediting experiential learning from work or life, including formal

and informal learning experiences, thus starting with credit from which to build an individualised programme. A similar process occurs in other Higher Education Institutions, although students may be guided to determine the credit volume of their claims before they submit them, thus devising their claim to fit to a university template (eg University of Portsmouth, 2006), whereas at MU the assessor determines the credit volume of the claim after submission.

Work Based Learning at Middlesex University

WBL at MU is considered to be a “field of study” or subject area, rather than just a “mode” of study (Portwood, 2000). Thus experiential learning from a wide range of work activities, both paid and unpaid, may be used not only to meet formal subject discipline outcomes in order to be awarded “specific”¹ credit, but also to be awarded “general”² credit which may not be linked to a specific discipline. This provides students with the opportunity to submit significant areas of experiential learning for inclusion in their programme, as the foundation from which to negotiate their own curriculum. Therefore awards in WBL can be highly original and unique in content, reflecting the claimants’ own learning needs and subject preferences, and also responsive to their particular work demands. Importantly it is unlikely that a claimant’s experiential learning is discounted because it does not meet the requirements of a formal programme.

APEL assessment requires a decision on both the volume of credit as well as the academic level. Currently MU WBL programmes use eleven level descriptors to determine the appropriate academic level, but determining volume of credit has not been formalised. Common practice in APEL assessment elsewhere matches the students’ learning to formally stated modular outcomes, but if there are no outcomes to be matched there are no indications as to the volume of credit due. Credit in formal modules is calculated on the general notion that 1 credit equals 10 hours of notional learning effort (Walsh & Johnson, 2001) and reflects the amount of learning hours which the student is expected to have engaged in on a taught module by both taught and self-directed study. Unfortunately, in experiential learning, this time factor cannot be applied, as some individuals could have spent ten years in the same job and not learnt anything new after the first year. Conversely they may have extensive learning from, perhaps five, of the ten years. Thus, calculating experiential learning using the notional hours of formal study would therefore expect the student to make a claim for a time period of up to five or ten years of learning. Obviously this is unfeasible and unworkable, as a true picture would include doing the same activity until a level of expertise has been achieved, or doing routine and regular tasks that may

1 Specific Credit matches specific learning outcomes from programmes which the claimant has chosen to demonstrate s/he has the equivalent learning from a source other than through taught programmes in the University.

2 General Credit is awarded for learning demonstrated by the claimant, and does not have to demonstrate an exact match with taught programmes.

have little learning value at higher education level. Therefore somewhere between the recognition of a little learning and ten years' worth has to be calculated in a way that is fair to the claimant and reflects the notional learning effort.

Assessment

Assessment can be used to facilitate learning as a result of specific learning activities and to enable the learner to develop learning behaviours (Bryan & Clegg, 2006) and provide feedback for the teacher on quality assurance aspects of the programme. This is true for APEL or traditional higher education programmes. Students have become increasingly strategic in the way they allocate their time and effort to learning and see assessment tasks as taking priority in their programme (Gibbs, 2006) and will take their cues from academics as to how they should spend their time because, pragmatically, they must focus on maximising their academic success through completing the assessed task (Gibbs, 2006). This means that claimants will benefit from knowing what is expected of an APEL claim, especially as they are all primarily full-time workers, but only part-time learners. Timely feedback to claimants can be used within a formative assessment process to develop an APEL claim as it provides the opportunity to improve academic work and indicates whether it meets the expected standards, criteria and course expectations.

Experiential learning

There is a vast literature related to experiential learning and work-based learning, with much commentary and debate, but little substantial research. In MU, Kolb's (1984) theory of experiential learning has been used to guide the development of the WBL curriculum. Kolb (1984 in Jarvis & Griffin, 2003:165) argues that:

... learning is not fixed and immutable elements... but [these] are formed and reformed through experience ... [it is] a process whereby concepts are derived from and continuously monitored by experience ...

Kolb argues that learning is a process, not a product, but that all new learning is relearning which is adapted in the light of new knowledge and/ or experience. Thus, experiential learning can be described as informal learning, in that it cannot be "taught" in a classroom. Eraut (2001) calls this non-formal learning and considers that such knowledge is gained outside a conscious effort to learn and without an explicit knowledge of what was learned. He argues that the outcome of such learning is *tacit knowledge* which comes to the fore in practice experience when a situation requires rapid action or complex responses that an individual cannot analyse or immediately explain. He also cites Polyani (1967) as defining tacit knowledge as *that which we know but cannot tell* and suggests that to make tacit knowledge explicit it must be uncovered, either by the *knower*, or by a researcher. Jarvis (1999:48) argues that tacit knowledge is learned from experience, and is a pragmatic

response which only emerges when needed, used within a practical situation as practical knowledge, and is therefore available as *taken-for-granted knowledge that we cannot articulate...* He argues that tacit knowledge particularly contributes to professional knowledge and is built up through an autobiographical process where we know it, but may not be able to articulate the *how, when, that, what* and *why* of applied knowledge in practice.

The project

The challenge for the APEL facilitator then, is to assist the claimant in articulating their tacit knowledge as the knower of that knowledge, in a way that equates to higher education criteria in order to enable the excavation of learning from experience, and to gain credits for it. Similarly the APEL assessors' tacit knowledge about assessing APEL had to be uncovered for others to access, use and make meaningful. This was undertaken through interviews with the assessors, using an APEL claim as a prompt sheet, for them to identify what they were looking for, how they recognised learning expressed within the claim and what measures of judgment they used when assessing volumes of credit. The resultant criteria, later called volume descriptors, were identified, tried, tested and refined through several processes of assessment. They have since been included in the module guidance for claimants, but need further refining, which will only emerge as they are used. The development process did not, unfortunately, manage to link specific amounts of credit to specific criteria. Collegial feedback indicated that linking amounts of credit at this stage would be reductionist in approach, and would set up student expectations in regard to the amount of credit that they should be awarded. Bearing in mind that further development is needed, seven volume descriptors (Table 1) have been extrapolated which can contribute to enhancing and maximising APEL claims. Each of these volume descriptors will be explored in relation to the values that are implicit and explicit within them.

1. Explicit outcome or product

This descriptor is heavily ascribed to academic values. It is taken as a given that the academic knows what a module, accredited activity or project outcome is worth in terms of academic credit. It focuses on the output of learning rather than the process, which is what APEL is meant to represent, and therefore does not primarily favour the claimant. The use of previously known values, which are not explicit to the claimant, limits the applicability to experiential learning. For example, working on a WBL project will depend on the individual's role and experience and the size of the project may vary considerably between individual claimants. However, the assessors used this tariff because they were familiar with a given quantity of learning and what they would expect from a traditional learning process, thereby making it transferable to the understanding of academics outside WBL, although recognising that module credit tariffs vary across institutions adds another dimension. Previous APEL claims in similar areas of learning reflect what might be termed "case law", where students from similar work backgrounds have laid a precedent of

Table 1: Volume Descriptors

- | |
|--|
| 1. Explicit outcomes or product(s) that may correspond to:
a. a validated module or
b. accredited learning activity or
c. WBL project outcomes
d. previous claims in similar areas of learning |
| 2. Incremental learning over time (+/- years), demonstrates broadening or deepening of learning and knowledge with application to practice |
| 3. Presented in sections or components that reflect Learning outcomes or specific learning incidents |
| 4. Demonstrates levels of learning from first principles through increasing complexity |
| 5. Recognition of formal training / education hours, or qualification older than 5 years. (10 hours = 1 credit for accredited training) |
| 6. Draws on a variety of sources of knowledge, creativity, originality |
| 7. High quality evidence presented & annotated appropriately |

expectations of the amount and level of credit. Whilst this is helpful to an academic assessor, and possibly to an individual claimant should they have access to examples of previous claims, it may undervalue a new claim because it may set a limit on the credit that can be awarded, no matter how good it is. Having an explicit outcome may also be something which is highly valued at work as it can reflect significant achievement, although the validation of notional learning effort can be challenging to the assessor, and cannot be accurately represented in the length of work time undertaken. This descriptor reflects Warner Weil & McGill's (1999) *villages of experiential learning*, of which village one sees the recognition of experiential learning as valid and reliable by academics, employers, professional and training bodies, and is concerned primarily with assessment and accreditation of experience from life and work, particularly to create a route into higher education, employment, training or professions.

2. Incremental learning over time

This descriptor values the learning gained from work which may have developed over a period of time, and which often incorporates an understanding of particular processes and procedures that are part of a job role and which may be essential to career development. However, it also can reflect academic values in that it may start at a particular point of a curriculum and build upon it to broaden or deepen knowledge and understanding. It may be difficult for higher education to ascribe a value to this descriptor as it is subjective and

may not be subject based, and thus may undervalue the claimant's achievements. For example, the claimant would need to demonstrate critical thinking skills in order for procedural or process orientated organisational learning to be seen as being equal to a subject discipline. In relation to unpaid or voluntary work, for example, learning about caring for a disabled member of the family may start with developing an understanding, and then knowledge of, the physical or psychological condition, and then develop into learning strategies to cope with and enhance an individual's quality of life. This learning may be such that it informs the practice of professionals involved within a situation, thus demonstrating some of the higher level skills of theory application and influencing and informing other practitioners. Ascribing value to this learning then can benefit both the academic and the claimant.

3. Presented in sections or components that reflect learning outcomes/ critical learning incidents

Learning outcomes and learning incidents are determined by the claimant and therefore represent learning which they have found significant. However, in presenting them to higher education, they have to be put into higher education language for validation. The academic challenge is to recognise the value of these learning incidents and outcomes that reflect the claimant's values. Again these may be from non-traditional sources of learning such as voluntary work, or personal relational insights contributing to personal or professional growth and as such, be highly significant for the claimant. Warner Weil and McGill (1989:17) identify the fourth village of experiential learning as being personal growth and development in which they argue that:

... experiential learning becomes the basis for cognitive, perceptual, affective and behavioural learning, and for exploring ways in which these can be integrated in the work situation and beyond ...

However, there needs to be a balance between personal learning insights with the valuable learning acquired from them and their use and applicability to the APEL claim and higher education programme overall. This may come as part of the context of learning, or the way it is to be used as to contribute to the rest of the programme. The validation of this learning is inclined towards higher education by putting it into a formal vocabulary of learning outcomes although encourages the claimant to expose significant personal insights.

Facilitating the claimant to reflect upon and interpret their experience as a resource for learning generates 'general' credit (Bailie, 2000). The acknowledgement of general credit within a higher education programme does not link into specific learning outcomes of particular programmes although it may entail development of individually negotiated programmes as at MU (Garnett, 1998). Consequently, it may not be possible to acknowledge and reward the full value of an APEL claim, since it may not fit within a designated programme of study.

4. Demonstrates levels of learning from first principles through increasing complexity

This descriptor requires the demonstration of building knowledge, with a variety of component parts, in a way that expects analysis, synthesis, evaluation and reflection to be evidenced as academic skills. Credit recognition does not account for the claimant learning these skills as part of their notional learning effort, just the ability to demonstrate the accumulation of such skills during their work. It expects evidence of reflection upon the learning process, and the application of, for example, Kolb's (1984) learning cycle through the process of application and modification in the light of experience. It can be claimant-led in terms of presenting the process of their learning, but the academic value lies in the skills that are used to make learning explicit. From the higher education view, the value of this learning lies in the ability to codify it and evidence it in terms of layers of knowledge. The boundaries of this learning will tend to be set by the assessor's understanding of the subject or discipline, and this may be challenging to a claimant who has learning that transgresses these boundaries into unknown territory; unknown that is, for the assessor. Similarly, the academic may perceive that not all expected content is included, purely because it has not been relevant for the given learning experience, and the academic could penalise the claimant for that, thus undervaluing the learning.

WBL as a field of study has done much to challenge traditional discipline-based assumptions associated with APEL (Armsby et al, 2006), not least in recognising that university level learning can occur outside the university, thus challenging the traditional view that knowledge is only generated from research within higher education, of which this is an example. The process of generating knowledge from practice, which is then formalised by academia through research, demonstrates that knowledge is often generated from practice or work in the first instance. Only when a job becomes professionalised does knowledge become absorbed into a higher education syllabus to be researched and inculcated into new recruits to the profession by transferring the knowledge of long standing experienced practitioners and philosophy of practice (Greenwood, 1966). APEL thus offers academia with a route to new knowledge generated from new professions.

5. Recognition of formal training / education hours, or qualification older than 5 years

Attendance on a training programme does not guarantee the amount and depth of learning acquired from the process although the learning time may suggest a volume of credits. Exposure to information does not make learning happen, so the value of this descriptor is in recognising the contribution formal training makes to future experiential learning. The value to the individual may be new theoretical knowledge, but the value to the academy is how that learning is used, especially where there has been no formal assessment, which often occurs in unaccredited training. Drawing on formal learning from past years allows the claimant with old qualifications to be recognised, where appropriate, as being

contributory to a wider pool of non-formal knowledge (Eraut, 2001) that they can draw upon in their daily work. The danger for both parties is to assume that having attended specific training programmes, the time should be recognised automatically, rather than appreciating that not all training is absorbed for future use.

6. Draws on a variety of sources of knowledge

This recognises the claimant's personal intellectual capital and knowledge sources, but relies on the evidence within the claim and the presentation to make the academics value it too. The individual can draw from a wide range of personal knowledge of value to them, but which may not be in the usual remit of the assessor to acknowledge. For example, formal knowledge of the organisation which enables the individual to perform their role may require them to draw on a range of skills and capabilities that would not be formally recognised in a higher education context, such as the ability to manage others through a change process whilst also drawing on the tacit knowledge of an organisation, together with individual knowledge of a subject discipline, such as health or education. This is a high level skill, not easily taught, particularly as it may include a claimant identifying their own personal talents and abilities that contribute to significant learning. Academics are most likely to value this through the way it is communicated by the claimant, thus depending on the claimant's ability to turn it into a language that is acceptable to the academy, and citing recognisable sources of information that carry academic credentials. This tension was also noted by other researchers into APEL (eg Peters, 2004), who identified that successful claims required the skill of "cracking the code" to enable the claimant to speak the language acceptable to academia. Therefore, academia is putting boundaries on learning by determining acceptable ways of presenting knowledge.

7. High quality evidence presented & annotated appropriately

The ability to select and discriminate between types of evidence is valued by academics as it is a mode of proving that learning has happened as a product rather than as a process. It is valuable to the claimant, mainly in that it is evidence of their performance capability, thus illustrating their notional learning effort, but cannot predict the outcome. The process of compiling the evidence may provide the opportunity for the claimant to recognise and appreciate the worth and value of their own learning achievements, and can therefore be powerful in itself, but it may not carry value outside the APEL claim itself. Interestingly, as part of this project, feedback from the claimants themselves indicated that evidence played a large part in recognition of their personal achievements. This mainly arose from the opportunity to gather, collate, illustrate and reflect on personal endeavours, leading to their tacit knowledge from these activities being exposed to external scrutiny. Whilst for some this was uncomfortable, being likened to digging up evidence of a personal trauma, such as divorce, for others it was an opportunity to appreciate how far they had travelled on their personal journeys. To have this validated by higher education as being of value and being awarded credit was highly significant to them as individuals.

Conclusion

These seven volume descriptors have demonstrated that the process of APEL carries value for both academics and claimants. However, academia sets additional boundaries upon claimants even when the APEL claims are individualised and do not have to conform to module templates. While this is not seen as problematic by higher education, for the non-traditional learner it adds invisible hurdles and mysteries to the APEL assessment process. In terms of this research, it demonstrates that the process of describing credit volume is value laden, even though at this stage it was not possible to reconcile specific criteria to specific credit amounts. It also demonstrates that even in a subject area such as WBL which purports to acknowledge new learning and knowledge from outside the university, higher education still sets boundaries which rely on academic value judgements, rather than the claimants'. Unfortunately it does not resolve the problem of objective assessment of general credit in APEL claims.

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Work-based learning and stakeholders

From individual ‘living theory’ to improved organisational practice – how work-based learning makes the difference

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Abstract

This paper argues that work-based learners make sense of who they are and what they do by researching their own practice in the company of others. Unlike the achievement of gaining a mark in an examination based on what is already known, for work-based learners the outcome is often a surprise and thus less well able to be assessed by fixed criteria. It is about a raised level of awareness which has a living quality which can only be appreciated by others capable of seeing the world through the same learning processes. This paper will argue that there is a dialogic relationship between a “self” becoming aware of who s/he is and the context (work) which gives a form, shape to the self, opening out its understanding.

The paper draws on existentialist literature whose very purpose is to explore how we “ex-ist”, (literally “stand out”) as well as the work of Whitehead and McNiff (2006) on “living theory”. The paper also illustrates how the notion of “learning conversations” is being introduced to a range of companies as a way of connecting up an individual’s evolving sense of meaning and “living theory” with “others” who can give it form.

My conclusion is that work-based learning’s achievement is that the very process of researching one’s own practice reveals an underpinning “living theory” and in an organisational context – which this paper focuses on – enables others to recognise it as their living theory as well.

Introduction

The focus of work-based learning has been on the individual getting recognition for learning from the workplace which can be accredited against academic criteria. There has been little focus on how organisations can benefit from this learning, although Critten and Moteleb (2007) turned their attention to the organisation and how new knowledge can be created.

In this paper I am tackling this subject from another angle which is not about the “output” of learning (accredited or not) but the “process” of learning which learners in the workplace are encouraged to work through. I argue that work-based learners make sense of who they are and what they do by researching their own practice in the company of others. It is in “the company of others” I want to focus on because I think this is the key to transforming individual learning into organisational learning.

I begin by describing the framework within which work-based learning is traditionally accredited and then introduce the concept of “living theory” which I argue is the core value

to be realised from reflecting on practice in the workplace. I then explore how the dialogic process involved in reflecting on one's own practice can be extended to and through others and how this in turn can be the mechanism whereby an organisation as a whole can reflect on and develop its own practice. Finally I consider the kind of support mechanisms an organisation needs to ensure this practice is sustainable.

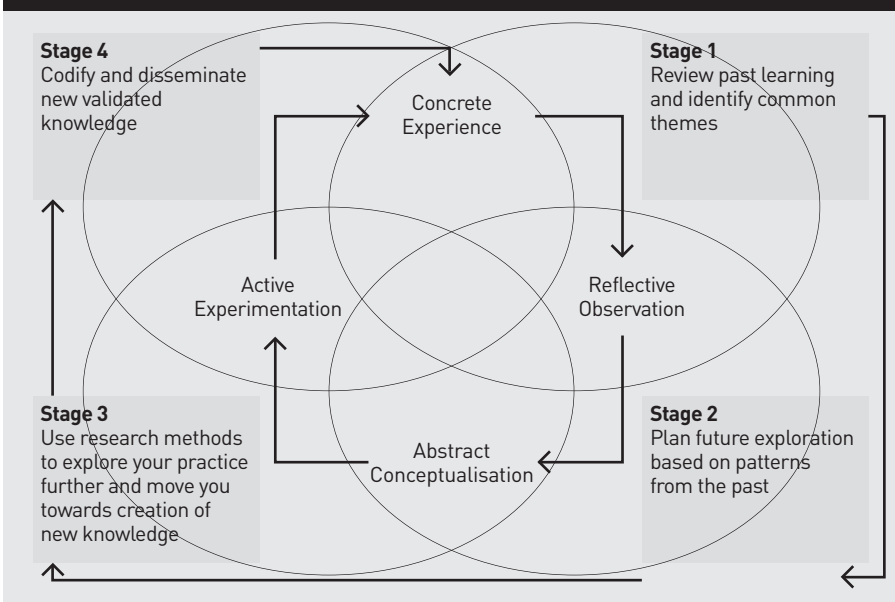
A framework for work-based learning

Below I have reproduced the kind of phases we enable work-based learners at Middlesex University to follow to reflect on and articulate their learning at work which can then be accredited against appropriate academic criteria. The Kolb learning cycle still serves as a useful way of articulating the four underpinning learning processes. Kolb (1985) describes learning as:

... the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience.

This is the process that underpins all learning in the workplace but it is also, I suggest, the process which can lead to organisational learning and change.

Figure 1



In work-based learning programmes run at Middlesex University Business School a key stage is a particular approach to action research which we introduce at Stage 3 in Figure 1 above. This is action research leading to what Whitehead and McNiff call ... *living theory*. The notion of “living theory” reflects the twin process of looking both internally at one’s own theory of practice but also outwards to verify it with others.

We gather data and generate evidence to support our claims that we know what we are doing and why we are doing it (our theories of practice) and we test these knowledge claims for their validity through the critical feedback of others. These theories are our living theories. (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006)

In the rest of this paper I want to focus on just how knowledge claims are and can be tested out with others and the implications for the organisation.

The sharing of work-based learning

The sharing of knowledge was a feature of Critten & Moteleb (2007). This described a work-based learning programme designed for a national financial institution where the sharing of learning in action learning sets was as critical a part of the process as the accreditation of individual learning. But, though the outcome of work-based learning using action research as living theory was the catalyst for making the learning explicit and shared with colleagues in action learning sets, the learning that emerged never made an impact on the organisation.

I tried to short circuit the process by reading the final projects of all 14 managers and distilling, as I saw it, the corporate wisdom which I reproduced as a report with 10 key headings and containing extracts from everyone’s project. This was sent to the organisation but, as far as I know, was never disseminated further.

The frustration at so much learning not being valued by the organisation that had invested in the learning programme has largely driven this paper as I wonder what kind of model might capitalise on individual learning (“living theory”) add value to it as it is shared with others (through dialogue) and provide an opportunity for the powers that be to *also* be engaged in the process.

The “aha” moment, for me at least, is that the only way of raising the level of awareness of learning in an organisation as a whole is by creating opportunities, space for senior managers to see the world these students see through the same learning processes. This process was well understood by those managers from the financial institution who saw beyond the project to the kind of context that they were co-creating with others. For example:

What I found most interesting as an action researcher, perhaps in contrast to the position of positivist researcher analysing remote survey results, was the nature of the conversations that surround ...words. The key impression for me [was] that these were not words that the teams wanted the "organisation" to provide for them. Instead the key common desire was that they should create this for themselves, between them.

This is the experience of "dialogue" which has been described as "meaning running through":

*Dialogue ... is about a shared inquiry, a way of thinking and reflecting together ... Dialogue is a living experience of inquiry **within** and **between** people.*
(Isaacs, 1999)

This concept of "dialogue" has its roots in physicist David Bohm's notion of "the implicate order":

The 'implicate order' is the idea that underlying the physical universe is a sea of energy that 'unfolds' into the visible, explicate world that we see around us.
(Isaacs, 1999:29)

Bohm saw the sharing of ideas within a circle of participants as creating a "container", within which emerging knowledge assumed a physical form. This is not an easy notion to appreciate unless you have been in a dialogue and used it to tease out new knowledge. I have used it with students as an example of action research methodology whereby within a short space of time a group can "co-create" knowledge/theory in which they all share.

The process begins with a research question. For example: "How can an organisation be said to learn and develop?" Each person in a group of 6-8 people then has an opportunity to give voice in response to this question. No one can interrupt anyone else. Then another member of the group continues – not necessarily to respond to what the previous speaker has said but, in response to what is at the **centre** of the container – drawing out and making explicit an emerging theme. Each person's comments are recorded verbatim on post-it notes. And, after the group seem to have exhausted the dialogue they are asked to sort out the post-it notes into patterns, themes – and this provides a second iteration of emergent knowledge.

For example, in Figure 2 below are three statements from a dialogue on "How can an organisation be said to learn and develop?" numbered in the sequence in which they were made, which were grouped together under one cluster which the group labelled: "Degree to which change/development can be consciously developed."

Figure 2: Post-it notes for statements 2, 22 and 43 from “container” activity

Post-it Note 2	Focused change v Reactive survival
Post-it Note 22	Need for change to be a conscious process in order to be able to influence
Post-it Note 43	The feeling is that you are helpless

At the end the various clusters were arranged in a graphic which sought to make links between the various clusters, as shown in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Some issues raised in dialogue around the question: “How can an organisation be said to learn and develop?”

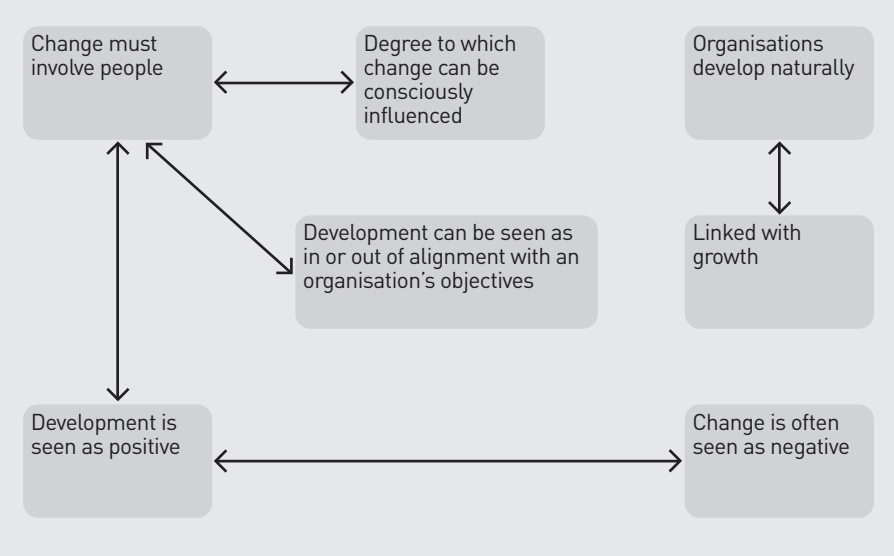


Figure 3 represents what might be termed as the theory emerging from a dialogue, in this case, between a group of students. But within an organisation it could emerge from dialogues amongst specific professional groups, each of which would evolve their own theory.

As it happened, the action learning sets supporting work-based learning were not expected to engage in dialogue. I took on the role of identifying clusters of themes from the students' final projects which would have been better done by themselves, so that it was **their** theory rather than mine. But if we are looking to moving beyond individual to organisational learning, it seems to me we need dialogic processes like this in which, in Bohm's words, literally to "contain" emerging learning.

In contrast to my reading separate projects and projecting my own picture back to the organisation – as I did with the financial institution last year – each group would be encouraged to find a way of linking up their learning into common themes.

Presentation or Representation of knowledge

But the final question – and still biggest hurdle to confront – is how can the organisation as a whole be "engaged" in the process? A traditional model of knowledge exchange would perhaps have each group present the outcome of their learning to a senior manager – much as happens at moment as students present their final project to a key manager in the organisation who has a stake in the project. But this simple transmission model assumes that there is some body of knowledge to be communicated from one side to the other. Suppose however that engagement with senior managers (representative of the organisation) took the form of an extended dialogue where they were not merely spectators passively receiving a monologue, but had to engage actively. In other words, the senior managers too would have to engage in the learning process and "see" what is behind the words. They too would have to live the emerging "theory".

*The word **theory** comes from the same roots as the word **theatre**, which simply means 'to see'. A theory is a way of seeing. (Isaacs, 1999:73)*

If it is difficult enough for an individual to make explicit to themselves how they "see" the world (what we would call "living theory") how much more difficult is it for an organisation to collectively "see" itself through the eyes of its members. This is what Argyris and Schön regarded as the essence of organisational learning 30 years ago and before the term "the learning organisation" became almost a brand name in itself:

*Individual members are continually engaged in attempting to know the organisation **and to know themselves in the context of the organisation**. At the same time their continuing efforts to know and to test their knowledge represent the object of their inquiry. Organizing is reflexive inquiry. (Argyris & Schön, 1977, my emphasis)*

The words emphasised above have always intrigued me but since seeing work-based learning as a process where the learner is both subject *and* object of her/his own inquiry, it makes sense. And, what is more, mechanisms and notions like “living theory” and “dialogue” provide a mechanism for making an organisational world view explicit so that we now have the mechanisms to continually engage all members of an organisation. This comes close to one definition of the “learning organisation” from the early nineties:

A learning organisation is one that facilitates the learning of all its members and continuously transforms itself. (Pedler et al,1991)

In the early nineties there was a great deal of optimism about how the “learning organisation” could transform the way we think about organisations. Perhaps inevitably, though, the work of Pedler et al in the UK and Peter Senge in the US (Senge et al, 1994) led to numerous guides on what steps had to be taken to **become** a learning organisation and ignoring the principle underpinning what a learning organisation was about – which was that it was a **process** of becoming; a journey not an end state or a series of functions to be ticked off on a list. It seems to me that Senge got closest to what it is about when he wrote:

A learning organization is a place where people are continually discovering how they create their reality. And how they can change it. (Senge, 1990:12-13)

This seems to be the process in which I am encouraging my work-based learners to engage, as they reflect on their learning collectively to make sense of it together. But does this necessarily mean that these kinds of processes become embedded in an organisation’s way of doing things? In my experience; sadly not. In the final section of this paper I suggest the kind of infrastructure that is needed to ensure that work-based learning is not left to work-based learners alone.

Getting organisational buy-in

Dixon (2000:5) wrote of the “learning organisation”:

If people begin sharing ideas about issues they see as really important, the sharing itself creates a learning culture.

This moves the agenda back to fundamental processes like sharing knowledge and, indeed, the nature of knowledge itself which in recent years is increasingly seen not as an “it” but as a process of “... *communicative interaction* ...” (Stacey, 2001), where “... the focus is more on context and narrative than on content ...” (Snowden, 2002) and where knowledge emerges from and is sustained by “*communities of practice*” (Wenger, 1998). I have written elsewhere (Critten, 2006) about how:

... communities of practice...can enable us to contextualise the concept of organisational learning in a way that the concept of "learning organisation" was never able to do. The argument ... is that the heart of learning and knowledge does not reside in an abstraction called "an organisation" but in: "Communities of Practice [which] are the locus of real work ..." (Wenger, 1998:243). Savage (1996) calls this: "work as dialogue".

So, in order to get organisational buy-in to support and capitalise on work-based learning, I suggest we need to help the organisation recognise the subtle processes of learning that are happening all the time in workplace conversations:

In the movement of our everyday communicative activity, we are creating who we are and what we can do together within shifting constraints of a material, technological and social nature. This is not the way we usually describe what we are doing in organizations. (Shaw, 2002: 30)

Patricia Shaw's description of her work as a consultant helping organisations pay attention to "conversations" in the workplace demonstrates how: *... organising is a conversational process and organisational change is shifts in the pattern of conversations.* My argument is that the very process of staff engaging in work-based learning also enables them to have learning conversations with themselves and others. But somehow organisations have to be enabled to see such processes as central to their own development and growth.

An "existential" conclusion

And finally, to end on a philosophical note. Thirty years ago, while researching the nature of evaluation of management training for my PhD, I became intrigued by notions underpinning existentialism in the context of how "man" can essentially put a value on "man" and whatever s/he chooses to make. In a current book of the time Macquarrie (1973:45) pointed out that the word "existence" is derived from the Latin "ex-istere", literally meaning "to stand out". It seems to me that the kind of processes we have been describing in this paper are also to do with helping our students become clear about their "existence" – in the literal meaning of the word, helping them "stand out".

But discovering yourself, according to existentialism, cannot be a solitary experience. Macquarrie quotes Sartre (1956:291) who considered that: "Man's existence precedes his essence", and turns round Descartes' dictum so that instead of: *cogito, ergo sum* – "I think therefore I am", it becomes rather *sum ergo, cogito* – "I am, therefore I think". This could be interpreted as a rather egocentric view which Sartre (1956:302-303) rejects:

It is not only one's own self that one discovers in the cogito but those of others too... thus the man who discovers himself directly in the cogito also discovers all the others and discovers them as the condition of his own existence. He recognises that he cannot be anything...unless others recognise him as such. I cannot obtain any truth whatsoever about myself except through the mediation of another...Thus at once, we find ourselves in a world which is, let us say, that of "intersubjectivity".

Can we envisage a time when the process of learning through work in partnership with others can create a new "self" and organisations will discover new "theories" of practice through a process of continuous shared dialogue?

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Making a difference? Engaging with employers and employees

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Introduction

The Workforce Development (WFD) Team at the University of Teesside (UoT) are engaging with employers and employees through various initiatives including a Work-based Studies degree programme and wide-ranging and innovative business-facing activity.

The degree programme is rigorously evaluated via the standard mechanisms which seek student opinions. This same evaluation technique is used with students who are employees undertaking higher education level learning in the workplace. However, the WFD team felt that the opinions and thoughts of employers were also crucial to the university to enable us to successfully meet the demands of businesses both now and in the future. In order to continuously develop and improve our offerings to business we need to develop useful relationships with them which facilitate meaningful dialogue. Operating an electronic Client Relationship Management (CRM) tool obviously goes part of the way towards this – if all involved parties use the system adequately. The university has recently purchased a new CRM system which has been specifically developed to meet the university's needs. In the future all staff will be encouraged to fully utilise this system as part of the fostering of relationships with employers in order to facilitate co-ordinated business solutions.

The University is committed to working with employers and their workforces (employer-based students) to define, develop and deliver high-quality flexible programmes of learning that are tailored to meet their specific needs, and enhance continuing professional development and lifelong learning. This commitment is built on the strong foundations of significant existing experience and work with a wide range of employers (including public and private sector, large medium and small enterprises) in meeting their staff development needs.

Strategic Development Funding for Workforce Development

The University of Teesside has recently been awarded £5.13m of HEFCE Strategic Development Funding (SDF) to develop new relationships with employers and support business growth and workforce development in the region. It follows UoT success in developing new courses for major organisations such as the health service, police and chemical industry. The £5.13m award is to deliver a significant institutional change programme to develop the UoT as a major business-facing institution, and deliver programmes supported by employers. HEFCE will also provide additional funding for courses co-funded with employers. This is expected to bring in another £4.5m to enable to 3,000 employees to take advantage of new higher education and learning opportunities.

Employers will be asked to contribute a further £3.3m to support the programmes over the next three years, making the total package worth £13m.

This workforce development strategy is set in the context of the University's mission and aims and core strategies, and wider government policies of encouraging Universities to play an increased role in supporting the higher level skill needs of the UK economy. The strategy provides the framework for a University-wide approach to the development of strong relationships with employers and the development of high-level skills programmes that directly address workforce needs.

The centrality of this strategy to the University's employer-facing mission will require significant changes in terms of institutional culture, internal processes and academic infrastructure, student support, external facing activity and academic practice. It will demand wholesale commitment across all parts of the University and will require significant staffing and financial resource.

Tees Valley Workforce Development Network

The step change required to accommodate the changing institutional culture has been preceded and partly informed by several funded projects. One of the most recent projects in which the WFD team has been involved has been the development of the Tees Valley Workforce Development Network. The Tees Valley Higher Education Business Partnership is a long standing partnership between the University of Teesside and the 5 FE colleges within Tees Valley – Darlington College, Redcar & Cleveland College, Hartlepool College of Further Education, Middlesbrough College and Stockton Riverside College. All of these colleges are strong at engaging employers in intermediate level skills provision, but less so at higher levels. With a track record of working together to develop indirectly funded higher education provision, the partnership now recognised the need to respond effectively – and collaboratively – to employers' needs for higher level skills.

The group identified a number of barriers to engaging employers in the higher level skills agenda. Their bid to the Capacity and Capability Fund, to create the Tees Valley Workforce Development Network, had a number of strands to address these barriers, including staff development and agreeing working protocols to enable collaboration. However, the strand that has significant potential is shared marketing of higher skills provision.

The group recognised that their collective offering to employers was a more powerful proposition than the sum of their individual offerings. Being able to provide a coherent package of higher skills, at a number of locations and across the entire range of an employer's needs, is a compelling offer. However, employers did not necessarily know what individual colleges could provide, let alone the collective package available in the

area. The Tees Valley Workforce Development Network needed to find a way of letting employers know what was on offer and how they could benefit from higher skills.

The network used Capacity and Capability funding to commission a professional marketing agency to support them in solving this problem. To design an effective marketing campaign to engage employers, the first step was to find out what employers thought and what they needed. A survey of local employers engaged with 50 employers to find out:

- the business challenges faced by local employers
- the barriers to employers considering higher level skills
- the barriers to employers engaging with colleges in the area

The findings from the survey gave the marketing agency the information they needed to design an employer-focused marketing concept – OneDoor.

Funded by the Regional Development Agency (RDA), and operational since November 2007, the aim of this very useful pilot project has been to create a network of HE Workforce Development Centres in the Tees Valley, by working collaboratively with FE partner colleges whilst ensuring that the network also integrates with the activity of North East Higher Skills Network (NEHSN) and those of the North East Higher Skills Pathfinder. The outputs have meant the creation of an identity/brand with a central point of contact for employers (OneDoor) and some initial customer service training for academic and support staff working at the company/learning environment interface. Common approaches to costing, pricing, quality and the development of co-funding packages have all been examined and scrutinised, ensuring transparency through working protocols that concentrate priorities on communication and information and guidance. This has gone some way to allay initial fears of collaborative working intruding/compromising on competitive markets in such a small geographical area. The funding has also allowed for the chance to offer some provide pilot provision for employers from the network.

The launch of OneDoor has provided an innovative and useful point of contact for those employers who have yet to engage with learning at higher education level and cuts through the plethora of information from providers to clarify the offering, giving a more direct route – which should ultimately lead to a positive experience. Having launched the brand to both internal and external groups via several road shows and a comprehensive marketing strategy, the network will organically grow, building on initial outputs. The evaluation of the whole engagement process and offer for employers, through the employers' forum, will provide interesting feedback for the network and employer engagement generally.

The Negotiated Learning Framework Project

The Negotiated Learning Framework project (2005-8) funded by the Learning and Skills Council had certain discernible outcomes: to engage with 282 new learners (primarily from small and medium enterprises – SMEs) in the private sector; to train trainers (the project used an existing Level one 30 credit University of Teesside award, *Developing People: Skills for Trainers*; to provide opportunities for these new learners to achieve 10 and/or 30 credit awards in areas which discernibly developed them for their employment. Only certain sectors could be targeted:

- Construction
- Contact Centres
- Digital Media
- Early Years
- Engineering
- Health & Social Care
- Hospitality
- Retail
- Transport & Logistics
- Voluntary & Community

All of the companies had to be located in the Tees Valley, and, there was some capacity to assist larger companies.

Most of the project learners needed quite focussed and targeted support. Many had not been involved in formal education since leaving compulsory schooling and this meant that they needed to examine the learning skills required for success at higher education level. Such learners also require appropriate progression routes, which can be quite different to those traditionally offered. Educational institutions need to be welcoming or to offer alternative venues if the campus site is not an option. Often the sessions are timetabled in an evening and such issues as catering and car-parking need to be addressed. The learning needs to be offered in a flexible way which includes relevant assessment.

How it worked

The project aimed to increase learning at level 4 and above in the companies targeted by a combination of the following:

- Accrediting current in-house provision
- Offering existing University modules
- Devising new learning opportunities in collaboration with company staff

Many companies required a hybrid combination of the above. For example a local media company formed a partnership with us to create a management programme. This became a 60 credit level 1 award which consisted of an amalgamation of existing in-company training processes, an existing University of Teesside module and a brand new module. This University Certificate in Advanced Professional Development (UCAPD) was seen as successfully targeting the staff's development requirements:

"All our staff who were on the course felt very motivated and happy, as they were so eager to learn and apply what they were learning. It was definitely a real win/win situation for both the company and employees, as it ultimately means improving the way we do business." (Julie Whiting, Training Manager Newsquest, 2008).

This glowing tribute to learning is good to know but there is still a real lack of quantifiable evidence beyond the anecdotal as to the benefit of higher education level interventions.

Initial/pilot evaluation

When speaking to companies who had the potential to benefit from the project it soon became obvious to the project team that what would really convince most training managers and managing directors was evidence from other companies with a similar profile to their own that by undertaking some higher education level learning their staff had become more effective and indeed their profits had increased. The team found that, while there was plentiful anecdotal evidence – comments and "sound-bites" – summarising the perceived improvements – there was a distinct lack of quantitative evidence; to such an extent that the team began to wonder how improvements could be quantified.

Increasingly employers are expected to articulate their demand for training and learning opportunities and also to pay for these (Universities UK 2007), at least in part, either by cash or other allowances such as allowing staff time away from their job to undertake study. With this in mind the project team began to evaluate the project's activities and the effect (if any) these activities had had, and were still having. The workforce development agenda had moved on rapidly during the project's three year life and it was felt that any research in this area would be vital to the development of future initiatives. This is now imperative as the university's business-facing activities accelerated after the successful SDF bid.

Method

The team designed a questionnaire which was sent out to companies as their engagement with the project came to an end. The academic modules were always already evaluated in line with quality assurance procedures which ensure the opinions of students are sought.

However, the questionnaire aimed at gathering slightly different information to evaluate the perceived benefit for the business. The companies were also contacted via telephone to offer assistance with the questionnaire and to encourage a response, although in many cases it was difficult to achieve one (over 70 questionnaires have been sent out so far with 32 returns). Some face-to-face interviews were also undertaken and these proved useful in gathering information and getting the best out of questions. Data was collected from 32 different respondents (mainly SMEs) and provided interesting and useful reading. However, the exercise (some of the data is given below) did not produce large-scale quantitative information and, to this end, a full-time researcher is to be engaged to gather and evaluate evidence to help focus the energies of the Workforce Development Team in developing business-facing activity within the university.

Examples of some of the questions and feedback from the pilot evaluation:

Has the higher education training helped the needs of the business and made a difference?
(Please give examples)

94% responded – yes; 6% responded – no

Some comments:

- “Yes, given better understanding”
- “Yes, morale has increased and communication improved”
- “Yes, benefited on both a personal & professional level”
- “No, not very, IT information out of date”
- “Better insight, had no actual knowledge of business start-up at the time”
- “Yes, able to apply knowledge instantly”

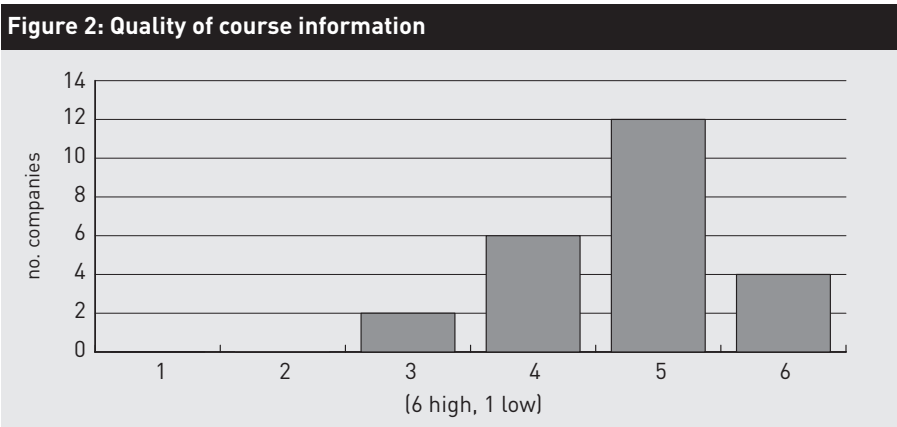
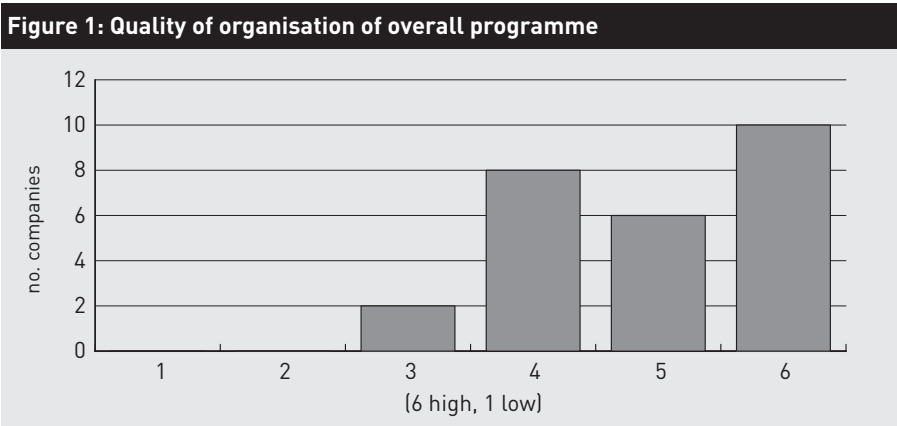
Interestingly, financial improvements were not cited in any responses. This information was not explicitly solicited but the team feels that they would like to have such information in future.

Do you have any other required training areas?

depends what's available	8%
no, not at moment	48%
yes, if anything relevant comes up	8%
first aid	8%
IT	18%
KPI reports	8%

It was surprising how few of the companies actively sought engagement with learning opportunities. 48% state they are not looking for further training at the moment whereas all of the modules undertaken offer progression routes. Interestingly enough, the greater percent of these companies were not actively seeking training initially but had the idea of engaging with the University “sold” to them. The suggestion here is that with time and effort (resources) at least some of this 48% would change their mind. Research depends on asking the right questions through hypothesis and prediction and it became very clear that this particular question needed some refinement in order to tease out detailed information on companies’ activities, aims; outcomes, ambitions and challenges.

Some of the questions asked for a scaled response. Some examples are given below:



From figures 1 and 2 it would appear that most of the companies were satisfied with the information/guidance and organisation of the modules/programmes that they had been involved with. This provides useful feedback when the flexible delivery of programmes is one of the key issues when engaging with companies and their learners.

Figure 3: Quality of module delivery and content

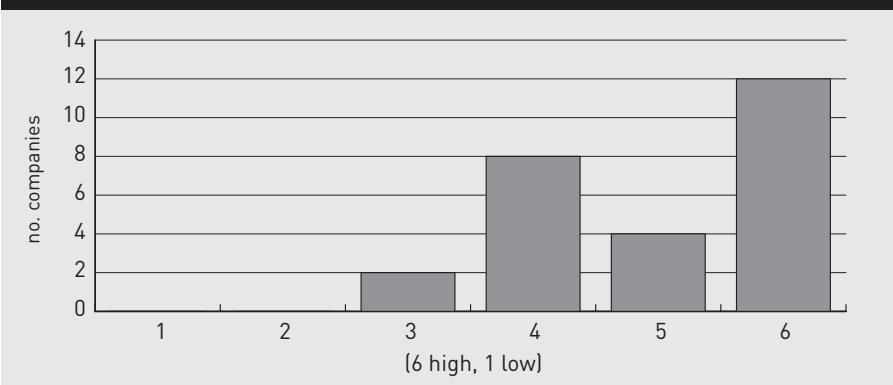


Figure 3 also provides an interesting insight into employers' perceived relevance of the delivery and content. This could indicate that many of the learners either were the employers themselves or that they were closely involved with the learner/employee experience.

Company expectations:

Met	62%
Exceeded	25%
Not met	13%

Company expectations of engaging with higher level skills training appears to have been met and in some cases exceeded. The challenge for effective learning is to ensure that expectations are recognised and established at the onset of development through to delivery, making the learning objectives a measurement for the final evaluation (Kearns, 2005). However, further analysis will be required, after a determined amount of time, to examine company profits (taking into account all the variables) to establish the added value in terms of revenue and hard cash. Research reports that relate company productivity to a measure of training are few – with positive correlations generally found for example, Dearden et al (2006). However, they have been difficult to interpret due to the fact that the training measures have only been measured at a single point of time and results could have been distorted by many unobservable factors.

Would you be prepared to pay in the future?

Fully	14%
Fully, depending on costs	7%
Fully, if staff were willing to contribute to funds	7%
Partly	65%
Not at all	7%

Increasingly, companies are expected to pay for their staff development and engagement with higher education and various funding models are emerging. The feedback from this project would appear to support the co-funding model with 65% of employers replying that they would be willing to pay “partly”. Some respondents indicated that they would prefer to allow time off to attend rather than paying with cash and there were also several issues raised about distance learning provision and the implications of this for time away from the student’s site of employment.

Why we are doing this and what happens next?

The rich information generated from such a small scale investigation influenced the decision to recruit a dedicated researcher who could use their time and expertise to enhance the questions asked and the manner in which they were asked in order to extract the most useful data on employer perceptions of engaging with higher education.

The big questions around how to quantify improvements still remain, for even if a company is discernibly more profitable after undertaking training and development activities at higher education level, this increased profitability is likely to be the result of a combination of many potential factors such as the financial climate, the price of raw materials, fluctuations on the market, fashions and current events. Occasionally a student may design a piece of equipment for their employer through a work-based project, undertaken through university study. If this equipment is then seen to improve working methods and create a certain, discernible revenue stream then that profit and difference is calculable. Usually, however, it is not that straightforward and employers comment instead on raised levels of confidence and improvements in staff attitude and understanding. When dealing with small companies the student is sometimes also the company owner and this has different implications.

Questions to consider when designing, delivering and evaluating higher education level learning to business:

- What might be classed as a benefit for differing companies and how might this impact be demonstrated quantitatively and qualitatively?
- Paying: how do we encourage companies to pay, especially when some of the initial interventions have been project funded/subsidised?

- How could we persuade companies to take up further learning opportunities with us?
- How can we reach the ones who have not yet engaged?

Major issues

Despite the changing face of higher education, academic credit remains a unique selling point. Employees are often quicker to appreciate this as they, personally, might value an award. However, persuading employers of the value of accreditation is slightly more complicated. Usually accrediting their existing training involves adding more time and effort and a formal assessment. However, it is in the bigger picture and within the fullness of time that employers begin to realise the potential influence of accredited training (part of why the relationship building mentioned above is so vital) as they see how it empowers their staff and also gives status to their sector's activities. University level credit is portable, quality assured and allows parity across levels; it encourages (coherent) progression routes, and is recognisable across the UK. As such a powerful tool it is imperative that the status and quality of credit are carefully protected and monitored.

Partnerships with employers

The whole business solution for those companies who need to make a strategic change to take their business forward can be achieved through partnerships between employers and HEIs. Interventions can range from short bites of learning to help developing a new range of products or to develop new technologies, business systems or processes. Examples undertaken by UoT are Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs) and Collaborative Innovation Partnerships (CIPs). These partnerships are between the University, a graduate – and the company. The company gets a highly qualified graduate working within the company plus a team of specialist experts – who will transfer their technical expertise, research and innovation to the company through the graduate.

KTPs are flexible in length from 18 months to three years according to the needs of the company. CIPs are shorter interventions varying between six and nine months. In return, through this working partnership, the university develops a clear understanding of practical/operational processes, new technologies and some of the real issues facing industry.

This university was included in a further impact study undertaken by the Higher Education Academy to inform their work in Employer Engagement (HEA, 2008). The work was commissioned to explore the work-based learning experience of employers and employees who had engaged with higher level learning. Six universities were selected for their expertise and advancement in their business facing activity. Using qualitative research methods and enquiry the short study concluded that higher education programmes of study can have a positive impact on employers and employees, but further investigation,

using both quantitative and qualitative research, is needed to truly understand the wider implications of this area of activity for HEIs. As one employer involved in this short study summed up:

"The holy grail of training is to be able to quantify its impact on the bottom line which we never achieved." (Nixon, 2008).

This remains an issue we must try to tackle. However, some very powerful supportive comments were made, and they should not be dismissed as merely anecdotal. As one Teesside Employer reminded us:

"You shouldn't ever count the cost of training because there is a bigger cost of not training – anything we do that develops people, develops the organisation."

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Understanding the cost implications of work-based learning

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Abstract

When considering the cost implications of work-based learning it is necessary to ask the question: cost implications for whom? At the centre of workplace learning is the individual worker who will have a keen eye on the price charged for courses. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and employers also have financial pressures and will be looking for good quality but reasonable costs. Government funding is often short-term and is focused on supporting the development of economically sustainable models of work-based learning. There are also the issues of wider political and economic influences. The Centre for Outcomes-Based Education (COBE) at the Open University (OU) has sought to address the cost-effectiveness of work-based learning developments to take account of these different viewpoints. In addition to the use of generic pedagogical frameworks, we have found that the development of cost-effective work-based learning needs to take account of a much wider set of issues such as building meaningful partnerships with employers, understanding the needs of individual learners and designing flexible delivery. This paper will explore this wider context and discuss the particular implications for a range of work-based learning stakeholders.

Introduction

Studies that have been carried out in the United Kingdom suggest that higher education institutions will continue to find it difficult to provide work-based learning opportunities that are cost-effective (Machin & Vignoles, 2001; Nixon et al, 2006). Such studies suggest that this will be a particular issue for those institutions that are seeking to increase this type of provision. This paper seeks to tease out the underlying reasons for such findings to help highlight the different factors involved. To fully understand the cost implications of work-based learning it is first necessary to recognise that there is not just one approach to this type of learning. There are many types of work situation and a wide variety of approaches to developing work-based learning at higher education level. These approaches vary according to a variety of occupational and practice-based requirements. Indeed such approaches are not mutually exclusive and more than one type of work-based learning may be of benefit within the same workplace. There are also a wide range of stakeholders, such as individual workers, employers and academics, who are concerned with the associated costs. This paper focuses on cost in terms of finance and of time whilst acknowledging a number of other types such as opportunity cost. In choosing work-based learning, stakeholders are giving up the opportunity to spend time and money on other activities and so will want to know that this type of learning can provide benefits over and above other options.

Different models and approaches

Before going on to explore a number of factors influencing the cost of work-based learning, it is important to acknowledge that a wide variety of models and approaches have been developed. These models and approaches are diverse and range from accrediting in-house training to specifically designed work-based learning awards. Looking back to the beginning of the twentieth century learning through experience has had a long history of being linked with education (Dewey, 1938). The continuous cycle of learning that is undertaken by successful practitioners in the workplace (Bandura, 1977; Schön, 1987; Lave & Wenger, 1990) points to the significance of integrating theory and practice in the learning process (Eraut, 2004). Currently in the twenty first century the UK has a new higher education agenda (Garnett, 2001) and is engaged in such activities as widening participation and workforce development in addition to the traditional discipline subjects. The scene is therefore set for the development of a range of new work-based learning initiatives and programmes to meet the UK's present skills agenda.

Levels of learning support

Our experience at the Open University has emphasised the need to have support models that accommodate a wide variety of the work-based learning options available. Work-based learning delivered in areas such as teaching and nursing requires support on a face-to-face basis that is often at a high cost. This is because there is a requirement for workplace mentors and direct observation of practice that takes account of different occupational and professional standards so there is the necessity to spend time and financial resources on workplace visits. Nevertheless, not all professions require this level of interaction and so we have developed a model that enables students to negotiate their support within their own workplace. We have reduced the role of the mentor to that of a facilitator so that it is possible to retain the positive aspects of mentoring such as general support and guidance whilst reducing the level of time and financial costs.

In the COBE model, the work-based facilitator is often the student's line manager who is undertaking the normal staff development role which that position requires. At the very least the work-based facilitator is expected to authenticate the student's work-based evidence and at most is encouraged to offer general support and guidance within the work place.

This low-level support model is for those situations and occupations that do not need direct observation. For example, individuals working in areas such as ICT or public administration do not have the same need for observation of appropriate skills as those learning to work in the care professions (COBE, 2006).

In recognising a range of support needs it is also essential to acknowledge that each workplace situation may need to access several approaches. Flexibility is therefore a

crucial aspect of developing work-based learning opportunities. There are cost implications of ensuring appropriate staff development activities for those involved in curriculum design in order to achieve the benefits of delivering learning that is timely, relevant and tailored to specific situations. Staff need to be able to develop the skills and knowledge to apply these different approaches to particular workplace situations.

Generic frameworks

One of our work-based learning approaches has a generic framework that can be applied across a range of employment sectors. It is appropriate for workplaces where observation of competencies is not required and where learning is the focus rather than occupational standards; for example, this type of development can encompass in-house development and participation in a workplace project or research activity. In addition this framework can be undertaken as negotiated modules or independent studies, as part of a planned programme of work-based learning. Generic approaches to this type of workplace learning can be more cost-effective for curriculum developers than designing a different framework for each sector. However, from our experience employers are seeking bespoke learning opportunities for their workforce so the cost implications of generic frameworks are not perceived in the same way by all stakeholders. Nonetheless generic approaches can help to clarify the underpinning design and can be a useful starting point for those developing work-based learning for specific contexts.

Work-based learning can also be carried out as part of usual work practices and assessed as learning that has already been successfully undertaken; for example through in-house staff development or through participation in a workplace project or research activity. Such approaches can be included in claims for Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) or they can be undertaken, as negotiated modules or independent studies, as part of a planned programme of work-based learning. Generic approaches to this type of workplace learning can be cost-effective if the employer and higher education institution can work together to meet joint workplace and educational quality assurance policies and procedures. However, this is not a straightforward process and a mismatch of expectations can lead to high costs or lack of progress in such developments.

Assessment parameters

Each approach to work-based learning will have its own assessment parameters. For occupations that require the assessment of competencies leading to a licence to practise it will be imperative that face-to-face assessment is carried out. For occupations that do not require such assessment, strategies such as reflective accounts and project reports may be appropriate. However, it is essential to remember that ... *current higher education assessment practices often fail to relate to the manner in which most developments happen within the workplace because they tend to rely heavily on accepted norms of*

HE assessment; namely, a reflective, written account of the individual's experience of learning in the work setting (Harvey and Norman, 2007:336). Therefore there are cost implications in designing the appropriate methods of assessment for work-based learning approaches. Whilst new models of HE assessment need to be developed they must still be able to be quality assured to ensure that workplace learners can be given the appropriate recognition for their achievements. This has financial implications for educational institutions in terms of their quality assurance systems which may have to be redesigned to deal with work-focused forms of assessment.

Political and economic influences

The focus on learning through practice within education has been influenced since the time of Dewey (1938) in the early twentieth century by the political and economic pressures of western societies. Governments have needed the workforce to develop the skills relevant for employment in complex industrialised processes (Wagner et al, 2001). Therefore both practical and theoretical education policies have been seen as essential to provide the education and work-based learning necessary to ensure that the demands of the labour market are met. In exploring the cost implications of work-based learning it should be recognised that education providers are influenced in their curriculum developments by such considerations as government policies and global competition.

The current political and economic environment is no exception as evidenced by the government White Paper *The Future of Higher Education* (2003) and the Leitch Report (2006). The emphasis on work-based learning is clearly set out in these documents as a way of ensuring that there is widening participation in education opportunities so that the UK population will be able to meet the skills needs of the current workforce. It is therefore possible to argue that this is a cost-effective time for higher education institutions to be developing work-based learning initiatives as the funding is available from the government for this type of curriculum initiative.

Government funding

Although government funding is often short-term and requires the development of economically sustainable models such funding has an influence on the decisions of educational institutions in terms of the curriculum initiatives they participate in and the emphasis that is placed on these initiatives. Educational institutions that rely on government funding cannot ignore the funding priorities of the government. Therefore as well as ensuring that funds can be accessed; educational institutions are influenced in the shape of their curriculum developments. Currently in the UK the government has decided to focus funding for those in the population who are engaging in higher education for the first time. In September 2007 the Government announced that in the academic year 2008 to 2009 it will no longer be funding institutions for students in England taking any higher education

qualification that is equivalent to, or lower than, one they already hold (DIUS, 2007). In addition the government has focused funding on awards such as the Foundation degree which has a compulsory element of work-based learning. These policy decisions are likely to have an effect on increasing the development of such work-based awards as they have a direct relation to the government funding that higher education institutions in England can receive. In turn this will undoubtedly have cost implications, in the form of increased funds, on the development of work-based learning opportunities.

The learner in the workplace

There are many considerations that need to be taken into account when focussing on the work-based learner. The learner in the workplace is a member of the cultural and social group that exists in that setting (Jarvis, 1999). Any learning that is undertaken in this context will therefore be influenced by organisational customs and the actions of work colleagues and managers (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 2003). As well as the financial costs that may be incurred there are the costs in time that will be required to undertake the learning activities. Time spent on workplace learning activities may interfere with organisational customs if consideration is not given to the possible effect on the learner's work relationships with others in the organisation. On the other hand, there is the potential for the learner to influence the practices of others in the work setting so that others share in the benefits from the learning process.

Personal goals

The learner may have personal goals that are related to learning aims outside of the needs of the workplace. Alternatively, the workplace may require workers to undertake learning to fulfil institutional goals relating to increasing profits for the organisation. In some cases the aims of the individual, perhaps to enhance career prospects, and the aims of the workplace overlap and both can achieve their goals through learning at work. Where there is a divergence between the goals of the individual worker and the employer then tensions can arise resulting in an unsatisfactory learning experience.

The worker may be seeking an opportunity to use their workplace skills as a way to access further or higher education (ie widening participation). Alternatively, the individual may have achieved learning at this level before entering the workplace and therefore will be seeking to enhance their education with learning based on practice in real-life situations. In this case problem-based learning can be seen to demonstrate the application of theoretical and academic learning (Geoffrey et al, 2000).

Individual cost implications

Despite a similar focus on financial and time costs, the cost implications of work-based learning may be different for many types of learners. Some work-based learners will have their financial costs paid by their employer and indeed some time might be made available within the working hours for this activity so that the worker does not have to meet the costs themselves. Such work-based learning opportunities are likely to be more common in large organisations which have relatively large staff development budgets. Workers in small or medium-sized organisations are more likely to have to meet the financial and time costs themselves because these types of businesses will be less able to meet all these costs on behalf of their staff. There is also the opportunity cost of choosing work-based learning over other types of learning. The work-based learner needs to be assured that this form of acquiring knowledge will help them achieve their learning goals.

The employer

As previously stated there is not just one kind of employer and when considering the cost implications of work-based learning it is important to take into account the organisational setting of the employer. Employers are major stakeholders in work-based learning as they will want to ensure that their staff are engaging in learning that will increase the profitability of that particular company. Cost is a legitimate concern of all businesses whether they are in the voluntary or commercial sector. We have found that employers are as much concerned with financial costs as they are with time costs as both of these have an impact on the employers profits. As a distance learning institution the Open University provides learning that can be undertaken to suit the learner and the organisation. In other words, learning can take place at a time and place to suit the individual and the workplace rather than requiring attendance at an educational institution.

To enable work-based learning to be really cost-effective it is essential that it is available in a flexible way that enables the learning to take place when it fits in with both the needs of the employer and the individual learner. In our experience employers are keen to support students who study our work-based learning courses because the student is able to negotiate their own support within the workplace and therefore keep the employer informed about the focus of the learning activity. The employer's input is important and where it does not require any involvement in assessment does not require a great investment of time. However, where the employer is involved in an aspect of observation or assessment then the time costs, as well the financial costs are increased. On the one hand, it is important to ensure that the learner has the appropriate competencies to carry out their practice within the appropriate guidelines but on the other hand, where the time and financial costs are high employers are less likely to provide such opportunities and therefore work-based learning may become too expensive to provide.

Higher education institutions

As has been discussed, work-based learning has a long history of being an influence within higher education (Trowler, 2001). However, for many higher education institutions this form of learning is yet to be firmly established within the mainstream of the curriculum. The dominant focus remains on the traditional academic programme therefore there are cost implications for those seeking to readdress the power balance between academic and work-based learning. For higher education institutions that are attempting to collaborate with employers (Lipsett, 2007) on developing work-based learning opportunities the issues of costs are important considerations. The Open University is a large distance learning institution with national and international students, and COBE has been able to benefit a wide variety of work-based learning stakeholders through economies of scale. Whilst the Open University is the largest higher education provider in the UK many higher education institutions in the UK now provide distance learning opportunities for their students. There is therefore the potential for many institutions to provide flexible delivery options to employers so that both time and financial costs are kept as low as possible.

Flexible delivery of work-based learning at higher education level has other implications in terms of institutional structures, policies and procedures. Whilst generic frameworks and economies of scale can provide cost savings there are greater cost implications to educational institutions when providing employer-focused work-based learning opportunities as these types of collaborative partnerships take time and need adequate resources. The current Government policy on Higher Education emphasises the need for educational institutions to collaborate with employers to jointly fund work-based learning provision. This has proved very successful in some cases (Foundation degree Forward, 2008) but for many educational institutions and employers there are still a range of issues to overcome, not least of which is the focus of their activities, ie education versus training. For educational institutions the priority is to provide learning opportunities for the individual learner whilst employers seek to train their workforce so as to increase their business profits.

Cost implications of not developing Work-based Learning

In considering the costs of work-based learning it is relevant to explore the implications of failing to introduce this type of learning to a growing number of higher education students. The cost implications in this scenario may be a return to a more traditional tutor-led learning situation at the expense of a more diverse, flexible and holistic learning experience. Such a scenario would have implications for learning in general as work-based learning provides the opportunity of sharing knowledge from both work-based and academic research. Therefore it is argued that work-based learning offers many benefits to those involved in a wide range of learning experiences and these benefits far outweigh any costs involved in developing a work-focused curriculum.

Conclusion

This paper has considered the suggestion that cost-effective work-based learning developments are hard to achieve. As has been discussed the fact that curriculum developments focussing on learning in the workplace may need more costly support and assessment requirements may be due to the different occupational standards that in some approaches need to be met. In contrast to learning only from books, work-based learning occurs in a setting outside of the educational institution and it is rooted in the social and cultural setting of the individual's particular place of work. Practitioners, employers and professional institutions seeking recognition for workplace skills require a range of support frameworks and assessment strategies that are relevant and applicable to the particular work setting. There are therefore a range of different considerations that need to be accommodated and which make developing work-based learning initiatives more complex than measuring cognitive knowledge in isolation from a particular setting or practice. In the wider context there are the political and economic influences that shape the way that higher education institutions develop work-based learning opportunities. The cost implications of developing work-based learning are directly linked to political and economic policies. These policies can work for and against curriculum developments in workplace learning. The current government agenda is focused on workforce development and by understanding the cost implications for all stakeholders there is scope at this time to progress the development of economically sustainable models of work-based learning.

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Employee attitudes to workplace learning: an insight into large organisations

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Abstract

Many employees feel that they have not reached their full potential either in education or at work (HE@Work Survey, 2008). Given that these people say they want to continue their development and that, post Leitch, there is a view that a significant proportion of future degrees will be gained by those already in employment there is clearly a need for employers and educators to facilitate enhanced learning opportunities. This paper provides a current snapshot insight into employee attitudes in large organisations in the United Kingdom and gives an indication of the views of employees about work-based learning and its value to them. In addition, it may have some relevance to the current interest by government and higher education in employer engagement.

Introduction

Following the publication of the Leitch Report (Leitch, 2006) and the UK Government's support for organisations who seek to up-skill their workforces, there has been an increasing effort to understand the views of both employers and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). For example, the recent Chartered Institute for Personnel & Development (CIPD) Annual Report on Learning and Development (CIPD, 2008a) examined the extent to which the Leitch Report has influenced the training offered by organisations to their employees and discovered that overall only 39% felt there had been any real influence on their training strategy, although this figure rises to 56% in the case of the public sector.

With new initiatives increasingly positioning employers as education providers, and with government seeking to increase employer engagement with higher education as part of the drive to improve higher levels skills in the UK, the views of employees, the likely learners in these scenarios, are increasingly important. HE@Work is a not-for-profit organisation formed by a partnership between the Edge Foundation and the University Vocational Awards Council (UVAC) and has been working with employers to encourage higher level learning in the workplace. HE@Work has found that employers will only endorse higher level workplace learning if it motivates their employees in ways that support their business objectives. However, employers' views of what employees want are not necessarily well informed. HE@Work commissioned an independent online poll earlier this year to gather initial data on employee attitudes to higher level learning in the workplace. The results of this poll have produced a useful starting point for a discourse with all those involved in these higher level initiatives.

However, the results are viewed, and clearly there is scope for further research here, there is an emerging picture of employee interest in employer training at higher levels

and an indication that those who have already, for example, gained a degree are more willing to continue their professional learning. All this points to the importance of higher level skills development within a professional context as a means of keeping the more expensive staff in a organisation up to date and productive.

It is also interesting to note that the results of the latest work-based learning impact study from The Higher Education Academy (Nixon, 2008) provide similar data.

What is work-based learning and what do employers want from it?

The focus of employee learning for the purposes of this paper and the online poll is work-based learning; consequently it is necessary to explain how these terms are being employed.

Costley (2000) suggests that ... *work-based learning*... is part of a cluster of concepts, including ... *lifelong learning*, *employability*... and ... *flexibility*. One of the challenges which results from this for higher education providers to employees is to attempt to introduce some clarity about what work-based learning at this level involves and the contexts in which it occurs.

*It is evident there can be no single or simple definition of what work-based learning entails beyond the notion that it is about learning (not teaching) and occurs in the workplace (rather than on campus). As such, **work-based** learning can, and should be, distinguished from the notion of **work-related** learning; the latter, in the form of vocational programmes designed to prepare people for employment which often includes employer determined competencies, eg national occupational standards, and does not necessarily require significant areas of the curriculum to be completed in the work place itself.* (Brennan, 2005)

Over recent years, the field of work-based learning has become more densely populated with many more diverse partners, players and cultures involved. Alongside this, the concept most frequently used in discussions of work-based learning is that of flexibility; all organisations, including higher education, are expected to respond flexibly and rapidly to labour market changes. Flexibility may require working in partnership or collaboratively with other organisations in order to achieve the desired goals most effectively. With this drive to create flexible organisations has come a corresponding emphasis on flexible learning, within and across organisations, which includes different learning levels, contexts, and modes of delivery and assessment methodologies. As Garrick and Usher (2000) state:

Organizations are expected to respond flexibly and rapidly to market changes and a premium is now placed on the need for flexibility not only within workplaces but also between them. Within this context are located interlinking discourses of flexible organizations, flexible workers and a consequent perceived need

amongst managers (at a range of levels) for flexible structures, modes and contents of learning to service these organisations and workers.

From the work HE@Work has carried out with employers, organisations seek straightforward, flexible and user-friendly ways of developing and educating their staff that will be appreciated by these employees. They want results quickly, before their strategic imperatives are shifted by other, possibly external, factors and they want improved methods of providing motivation to both new recruits and experienced professionals to improve retention and minimise recruitment costs.

Grip, Loo and Sanders (1999) suggested that if the nature and pattern of work is changing, a consequence must be that the context in which work-based learning occurs has also changed. In addition, responsibility for career management and skill development is seen to reside more and more with individuals, rather than with organisations. Workers are expected to be more flexible, to have a wider range of skills, and to be able to take on responsibilities previously undertaken by managers and supervisors.

Technical skills alone are no longer sufficient, as cognitive skills, together with an array of generic skills and dispositions, come to be regarded as the essential ingredients of successful performance in the workplace. In fact, compared with two years ago, organisations are now requiring not only a broader range of skills but also a higher level of skills. Employers class interpersonal and communication skills as very important (CIPD, 2008b) as these are the skills they feel will be required to meet business objectives in the future. Yet many organisations feel their new employees lack both these skills and those of management and leadership.

From this it seems that, if these are skills that organisations want but are lacking, then workplace learning can be a significant additional route for their development. This naturally gives a major impetus to the whole area of higher level education and skills. In fact, not only can workplace learning develop the skills required by employers and help to motivate employees, it also enables organisations to structure their development offer and assess capabilities more reliably.

Can workplace learning be attractive to employees?

Encouraging organisations and HEIs to collaborate and develop work-based learning and development opportunities will be of no value unless employees wish to take up these schemes. So, in order to establish what employees would want from these possibilities and generate primary evidence HE@Work commissioned OnePoll to undertake a survey.

This was carried out over a 5 week period with employees in the United Kingdom, working for private and public businesses in a variety of industrial sectors which typically employ over 2000 people. It was an attempt to gain a large organisation employee insight to inform discussions with employers, test employer engagement strategies and to build ways of collaborating with organisations to help them add external credibility to existing training, recognise and reward employees, and strengthen recruitment and retention appeal.

The analysis that follows was based on a self completed web-based questionnaire offered to 50,000 members of a polling network and completed by over 4,600. The essential characteristic for the survey was that everyone should be in full time employment with a large employer. Data was collected by age, gender, type of role and type of sector.

Although self-report questionnaires are generally considered to produce trustworthy results (Bill, 1977), we have, for this paper, chosen to focus our analysis on the ranking of responses rather than absolute levels.

Figure 1: Age profile of respondents

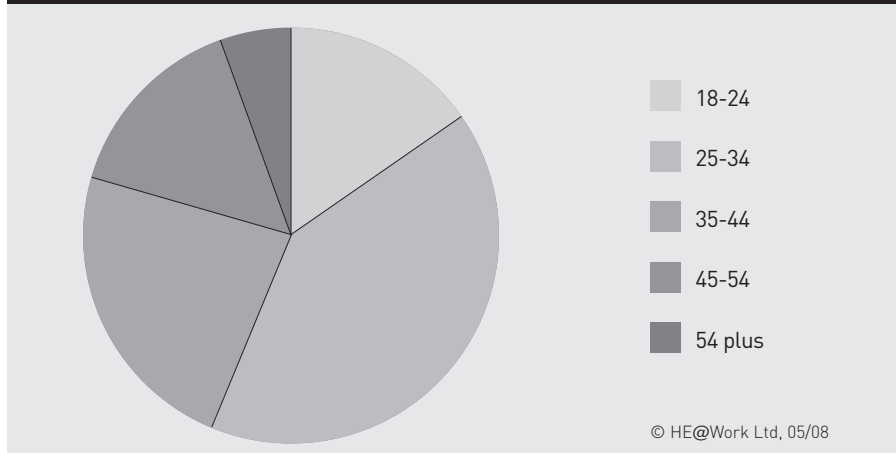
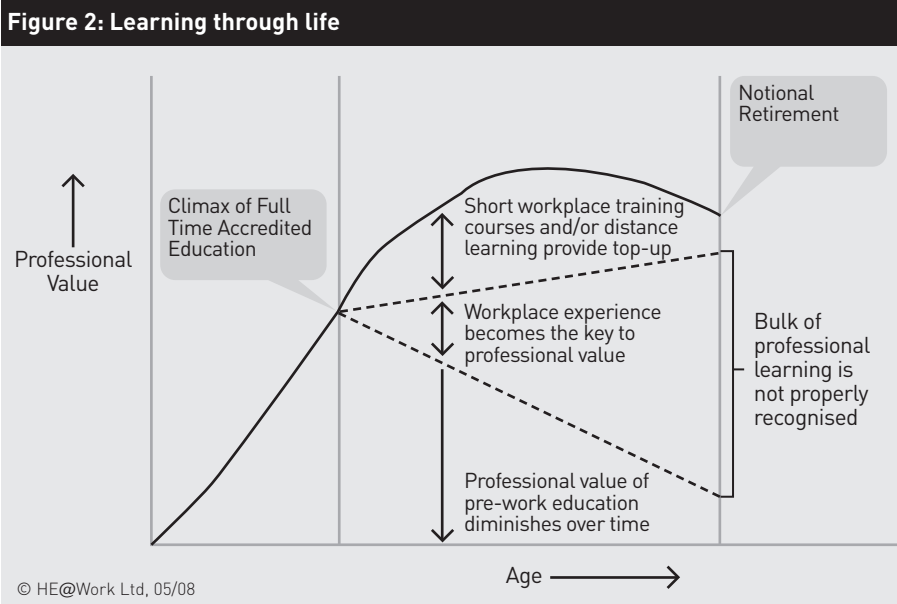


Figure 1 above shows the age profile of respondents and it is worth noting that the majority are in the age range 25-34 which is precisely the target group mentioned in the Leitch Report as those already in employment who will still be in employment in 2020. All sectors were represented with the highest percentages being in Finance, Health, IT & Telecom and Retail (10% and over) which may account for the gender split which was approximately one-third male to two-thirds female. There was a wide geographic spread from across the UK, with a majority of respondents, 26% coming from London and the South East closely followed by the North West, 11% and the South West with 10%.

There are a number of interesting overarching observations which provide a useful “snap shot” understanding of employee attitude to workplace learning; in particular, confirmation of potential need as described in the following diagram (Figure 2). Prior to employment an individual’s professional value is defined predominantly by progress on a ladder of qualifications. However, once in employment, an individual’s professional value becomes defined more by practical experience and specialist workplace training. An individual’s professional development thus becomes detached from the formal qualification ladder. Is this what employers want? Is this what employees want? Would employees prefer to have their ongoing experiential learning and workplace training recognised through accredited qualifications? These are some of the questions the poll sought to answer.



Summary of results

75% of respondents felt they had failed to achieve their potential in full time education and wished they had achieved more. Two thirds said they would turn the clock back if they could. The result was highest amongst those with lower level qualifications (‘O’ level or equivalent) but even 65% of respondents with degrees and 50% of those with postgraduate qualifications felt they could have achieved more.

Asked whether respondents felt they had achieved their potential at work, almost 75% said no. There was little distinction between respondents who were highly qualified and those with no qualifications. However, when people were asked whether they wanted opportunities to develop professionally, more than 80% said yes. Here, those with higher qualifications were keenest to develop. For example, 87% of postgraduates wanted to progress further whilst amongst those with no qualifications the figure was significantly less at 67%.

When the results were analysed by sector there was a tendency for those in technology-based sectors to be keenest on further development (85-90% saying yes) whilst those in sectors like media, hospitality, and building were least keen (60-70% saying yes). There appears to be a correlation between sectors where respondents tended to have lower qualifications and sectors where people were less interested in development.

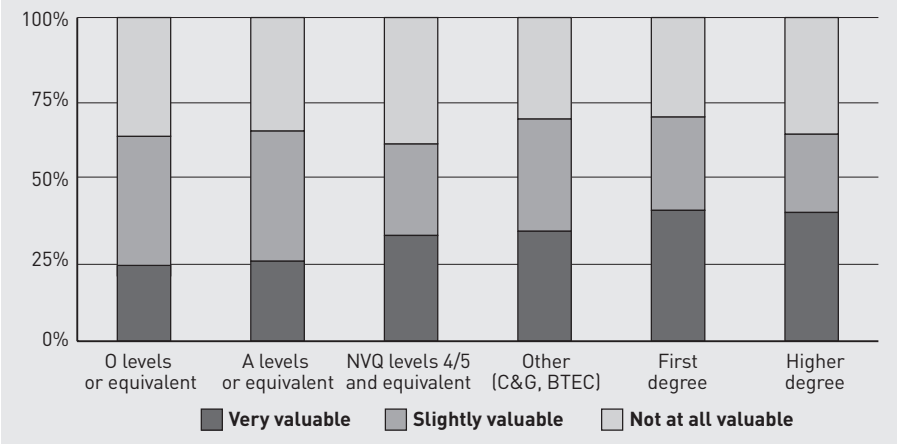
A conclusion that could be drawn from this is that the vast majority of people in employment want to continue to develop and the more qualified people are the keenest to progress further.

What qualifications are most valued in the workplace?

Data on the level of qualifications achieved by respondents was also collected. However, the data here is difficult to report with any clarity as, although respondents were asked to tick all the levels of qualifications they had achieved, there are indicators that this may not have been completed consistently. Nevertheless 11% of respondents held postgraduate degrees, 30% with first degrees whilst 21% held other qualifications such as BTEC or City & Guilds and 5% claimed not to have any qualifications at all.

However, the table below (Figure 3) shows the perceived value of qualifications by all respondents, regardless of whether they hold a qualification or not. One surprising result was that around 40% of employees saw no value in qualifications. A similar percentage of employees see degrees and vocational qualifications as very valuable. It seems that the employees are relatively evenly split between those who are motivated by work related qualifications and those who are not. This is an important message for those who see qualifications as the key measure of skills. O levels and A levels are considered to be of limited value, probably because, for employees, these are not the pinnacle of their education. The percentage of respondents claiming to have O and A levels was also very low (eg fewer people claimed to have A levels than claimed to have degrees, which is improbable) again suggesting that employees do not see these qualifications as anything more than stepping stones to more relevant qualifications.

Figure 3: Perceived Value of Qualifications



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Sectoral analysis shows that HEI qualifications are valued most highly by those in technical or engineering-based sectors, whilst NVQs, O levels and A levels are valued most highly by those in sport, fashion, and advertising. People in these sectors appeared less interested in qualifications as the results also indicate that they valued having no qualifications most highly. This may be a reflection of the lower qualifications held in these sectors. It was also apparent that managers are more positive about the value of qualifications than non-managers but both are equally positive about the value of professional development.

It was also interesting to consider the value of qualifications as perceived by those who actually hold them. For example, for those that hold O levels and A levels between 20-30% value them highly. The results also indicate that these people value these qualifications less than those who do not hold such qualifications. Conversely, where vocational qualifications such as NVQs, HNDs, and post graduate qualifications are achieved by employees, they are appreciated more highly with typically 40-60% saying they valued them highly. In this case the holders of these qualifications valued them more highly than those not holding the qualification. The exception to this effect was the standard university degree where both the holders and non holders valued the qualification highly (40-45%).

The inference that can be drawn from this is that “school type” qualifications are not very relevant to employment and people with these qualifications are disappointed. Conversely those who go on to gain vocational or specialist professional qualifications appear to find them very valuable and, indeed, more valuable than they expected. It is particularly interesting that those with higher level vocational qualifications such as BTEC appear to value their qualification more highly than do those with university degrees.

How would employees like to learn?

The highest response (over 40%) wanted on the job role specific training. Attendance at conferences and seminars, CPD programmes, and accredited short courses also polled more than 20%. External non-accredited courses, and support with longer term external programs such as MBAs and other degrees, represented 10-15% of the sample. Similarly distance learning and web-based learning attracted a 10% response.

Looking specifically at courses, the most favoured were short external accredited courses (25%); short accredited in-house courses and medium length residential accredited courses with 20%. Non-accredited courses attracted a lower return, especially the longer non-accredited courses at 10%.

These results were consistent between respondents with different qualification levels and those in different sectors, though retail, media, sport and transport seemed more strongly biased against in-house courses (polling around 10% for accredited in-house courses).

How does this compare with what their employers offer?

Figure 4: Accredited vs. non-accredited training



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A strong message that emerges is that employers predominantly offer short in-house non-accredited courses while employees want short externally accredited courses. Whilst, in general terms, the overall provision of short courses does meet employee desires, the balance between offered and wanted is reversed for short accredited and

non-accredited courses. Figure 4 shows that desire exceeds provision by a ratio 25% to 19% for external accredited courses while the provision exceeds desire by a ratio of 30% to 18% for in-house non-accredited courses. There is also a strong desire for more medium length accredited residential courses (19% say they want these but only 10% say they are available to them).

Dissecting this result by qualification level suggests that the need for more short external accredited courses is strongest amongst those with vocational qualifications or postgraduate qualifications while graduates with first degrees seem happy with the existing level of provision. This is not a matter of employers offering more to graduates; the difference was that employees with qualifications such as BTECs and postgraduate degrees expressed a significantly higher (35% versus 27%) demand for externally accredited course than did those with undergraduate degrees. Looking at sector differences it appears that employees in retail, media, hospitality, construction and advertising want fewer courses than employers provide while the more technology oriented sectors want more.

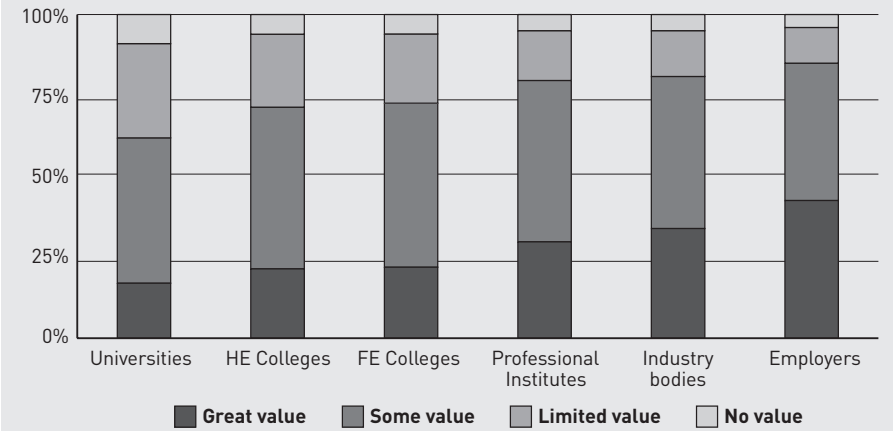
There is also a perception amongst non-managers that managers get twice as much workplace learning support as non-managers. However, both managers and non-managers responded equally in their assessment of what they received.

Who do employees think are the best providers of workplace learning?

The poll suggests that universities are the least valued deliverers of workplace learning while employers are the most valued (see Figure 5). Colleges are more valued than universities and professional bodies are more important than colleges, but employers are seen as the most important providers of learning. It is notable that around 40% of employees rate universities as having limited or no value as deliverers of workplace learning. In combination, the results shown in Figure 4 and Figure 5 suggest that there is employee demand for external accredited courses but that universities are not currently seen as the best solution.

Consideration either by qualification level or employment sector provides only minor differences. Respondents in property, media, building and transport seem to value HE and FE even lower, while those in managerial positions rate HE and FE more highly. The only people who do not place employers as the best deliverers are postgraduates and those in the property sector. In both instances they place professional institutes marginally higher. The fact that postgraduates rate universities more positively as providers of workplace learning suggests that the nature of the university learning experience at postgraduate level may be more in tune with workplace learning.

Figure 5: Providers of Workplace Learning

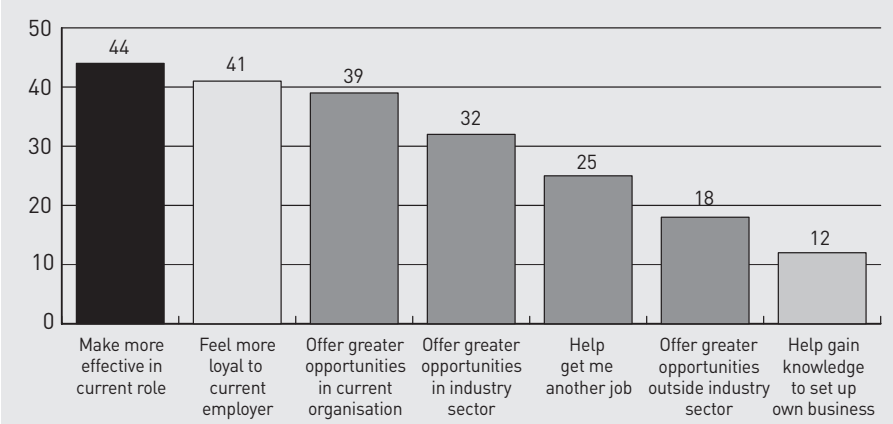


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Why do employees want to learn?

HE@Work often encounters employers who are nervous about giving employees access to higher level qualifications because they fear they will become mobile and leave. The final figure, Figure 6, goes some way to dispelling this myth. It suggests the motivation for employees to study whilst in the workplace is overwhelmingly aligned to improved performance in the current job and furthering the career with the current employer. The percentage of people who do study as an escape route is, in fact, relatively small.

Figure 6: Why people learn



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This result was examined by qualification type and sector of employment but, while the absolute poll responses differed, the ranking of answers was very consistent.

Conclusion

The most important finding from the poll is that people in employment want to develop further and would be motivated to better their performance in their current jobs if they received more externally accredited training. In particular:

- 75% of respondents had failed to achieve their potential in full time education and wished they had achieved more
- About three quarters haven't achieved their potential at work regardless of their educational level
- On average 80% want to continue to develop and the more qualified people are the keenest to progress further (87%). 67% of people with no qualifications at all would also welcome the opportunity to develop professionally.
- Those who get vocational or specialist professional qualifications find them very valuable and more valuable than they expected

This is supported by employees valuing short work-based external accredited courses as part of the employer offer. In addition, universities are the least valued deliverers of workplace training while employers are the most valued. However, professional bodies are seen as important to the employee. There is also sufficient evidence to suggest that there is employee demand for external accredited courses however universities are not seen as the solution.

The results challenge the notion that staff do workplace learning in order to escape from their current jobs. Rather, it suggests the motivation for employees to study whilst in the workplace is overwhelmingly aligned to improved performance in a current job and furthering a career with a current employer. The implication for employers is that they can attract, motivate and retain better employees by providing:

- Just in time relevant learning and development
- Integrated continuous professional development programmes
- More targeted use of training to reduce downtime
- A better recruitment offer by including accredited courses
- Development within current job to minimise turnover rates and do it in a way that is tied to the strategic business objectives of the company.

For universities, the findings of this research suggest they have some way to go in meeting the needs of employees in large businesses. However, there is an appetite for this type of qualification from those who have experienced university education.

What it does mean however is that if universities are going to take this agenda seriously, they must change and provide sensible accreditation of prior learning systems, learning opportunities which are work-based, flexible systems, competitively priced and responsive to the strategic objectives of the company. This is a very different agenda to the current provision which is dominated by three year full-time undergraduate courses largely populated by young people from school.

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A work-based learning perspective for shifting pedagogic design through the media literacy spectrum

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Introduction

This paper investigates academic cultures of e-Learners with a focus on the shift in the digital spectrum from the offline student to the networked learner. The argument put forward examines in brief, matters such as; social trends, struggles, practical options, potential outcomes, recommendations and possible approaches in exploiting these new tools and processes. A case study is presented to illustrate the learning design principles put forward in this paper.

This paper explores how our concepts of learning are considerably altered through changes in media. These media are transforming our cultures and in doing so rupturing traditional procedures of education and forms of learning. It is hoped that new insights and models of academic practice will be cultivated by examining the potentialities and limitations of media past and present and their contribution to evolving epistemologies. Our starting point recognises that the dominant mode of communication clearly shapes the culture of our time. Berger remarks that, ...the world begins to shake in the very instant that its sustaining conversation begins to falter (Berger, 1973:31).

McLuhan (1992) suggests that practices the "unofficial" culture (ie different cultures, age groups, minorities, the marginalised etc) may be witnessing a different reality and may in fact embrace the changes in a different manner. He argues that developing cultures may be at an advantage to this change.

Networked trends

In the university context, current practice of electronic writing latches to a tradition or seems to mimic the practice of the older printed document format, (we talk of pages, linear sequential narratives etc). Our approach may be regarded as retrogressive or unfamiliar to the budding or "undisciplined" Millennial researcher. "*E-mail is for old people*", according to the Carnevale (2006), arguing that few teens have interest in using e-mail. Teens are taking the lead in the transition to being a fully wired and mobile group. They prefer more immediate forms of communication such as text messaging and IRC (Pew, 2006). Only a small percentage use or see any value in the use of e-mail.

Examples of this networked learning paradigm can be found in parts of India where mobile phone sales and internet applications are becoming more in demand and seemingly leap-frogging Internet 1.0 and the physical networked presence. Gupta (2006) observes that, mobile phone use already has exceeded land line use in India, and by 2007, 150 million out of the 200 million phone lines there will be cellular.

Again in relation to emerging events in India Jain (2006) posits that:

We have missed the bus for Internet 1.0. But we do have an opportunity to catch the Internet 2.0 bus. In this world, mobile phones and network computers will connect to centralized services. Our lack of legacy in India makes us possible to jump to the next Internet? If only we can start building out the digital infrastructure for it.

Offline and real-time identity

The introduction of this paper has provided us with a picture of our modern-day e-Learner. But when we design for e-Learning events we should not limit our pedagogy to one student profile. Indeed, a bi-polar (either-or) approach is useful for critical scholarly discussion, but does not lend itself to the 'natural digital world' where learning takes place through a range in the continuum.

Table 1: Overview of offline e-Learning models

eLearning events	"Offline students"	"Millennials" networked learners
Synchronicity	Asynchronous	"Live interaction"
Learner age profile	Mature learner	Millennium kids
Learning style	Reflective	Spontaneous
Learning design	Just-in-case	Just-in-time
Learning platform	Local hard drive	Server-side & client-side web browser
Mobile applications	"off network games"	Bluetooth & Broad band wireless social online games & simulations
Historic perspective	"90s multimedia" stand alone resources	"00s new media streaming"
Content source	Expert generated Content focus	"Stakeholder generated" Process focus
Revise content	Slower turn-around on revised materials	Online revisions more quickly achieved
Push-pull preference	Tend to go to sources of knowledge	Tend to have up-to-the-minute information sent

The early “stand-alone” style multimedia learning resource was usually authored by a subject expert so the content was of high quality. It was asynchronous by default since it was designed for offline use. Self-assessment type feedback would be dispersed through the materials to promote a scaffolded or “instructional design” learning approach (Instructional Design, 2007).

If the student had a question or problem they would typically have to email an academic or technical support staff member outside of the learning system. The integrated communication we have come to expect in today’s virtual learning environments was not usually in place.

There were still the usual “just-in-case” advantages you would expect from electronic learning such as self-pacing, engaging high quality multimedia etc, but keeping the expert generated content current and up-to-date was more problematic offline.

There is an increasing awareness of the mature, lifelong learner in UK higher education. An example is the Institute of Education’s Master’s Level Module: *Issues in Educating and Training Mature Adults (50+)* (Mature Learners, 2007). These stakeholders may not have the ICT confidence and capability as their younger millennium generation counter-parts as presented earlier. Approaches to finding new knowledge to solve real-world problems may differ depending on prior knowledge and ICT capabilities. Therefore, mature learners that are not acquainted with “push-technologies” (ie – RSS feeds, smart-bot agents, etc (Botspot, 2007)) may rely on a more paper-based approach such as going to get the information from a library (Basiel, 1999).

Work-based learning perspectives

At the Institute for Work Based Learning (IWBL), Middlesex University, we provide distance learning programmes to allow full-time workers to develop and apply their professional knowledge at undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral level. The awards are trans-disciplinary in nature and can be applied across a wide range of occupational areas.

One group we work with are seafarers who, by the nature of their work, have limited access to broad band web tools and resources. Since these ship-based students are roaming the seas they may never meet their tutors or work-based learning colleagues. Although there is access to the internet via satellite, they have limited time allocation to the computers for learning purposes.

As a result of this learning context there is often a feeling of isolation as a distant learner. Through our Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning we sought to address this need. The first stage of this development is the **Offline Induction Project**. We did not want to be

constrained by the media type. If it was limited to a DVD and not a flash drive or memory stick there could be an access issue. We wanted the files to be presented through a web browser. Large file size is also an issue for digital video exemplars and case studies. Even with Flash streaming technology running digital videos can be a strain on the processor. If the technology leads on the design then there will be problems with making the resource scalable for the future.

The offline pedagogic design for our situation was the focus of our pre-pilot study. Our generic model approach in this project was to take this design for our undergraduate first-year inductees and apply and adapt it to our undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.

Induction resource design and implementation

This final section summarises the lessons learnt so far from the **Offline Induction Projects** aimed to meet the needs of learners exemplified by the seafarers (Offline Induction, 2007):

1) The need for good organisation

The project has benefited from a small team driving the production process.

- a) An author who has knowledge of the teaching experience and content is committed to creating content to deadlines.
- b) Multimedia producer able to provide technical skill across different media with professional education media experience (BBC) and experience of operating within an academic environment (PhD in education multimedia).
- c) Manager/facilitator to provide organisation and drive through the project.
- d) A well-prepared and rigorous production schedule, report logs and regular meetings.

2) The value of open participation approach

- a) All staff members were fully informed and see project developing (Content available to view on a website during development).
- b) Participate and ownership in specific manageable instances – video contributions, audio and text support (so overworked staff are not pressured).

3) Web 2.0 technologies

- a) A system of CSS (Cascading Style Sheets) driven stylesheet templates that are demonstrated on the website within the product illustrate potential for text, lists and table, text and pictures. Extra high production value content and design can be added at any time. Staff members prepare content in Word with reference to the stylesheet templates which the producer can quickly achieve in web CSS layout media.

- b) The stylesheet demonstrations of how Flash slideshow and video content can be added to a page. Staff can see the layout how the media can added anywhere on the site, pop up, side bar, separate page etc to add value to text content where the lecturer wishes.
- c) A browser website sitting on a DVD with a simple structure and a clear, easy to follow layout that can be reorganised – pages moved and content rearranged easily and quickly – therefore responsive to staff comment.

Critical review of the design:

The following table summarises the barriers and successes we experienced in our project activity:

Table 2: Critical comparison of project activity	
Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A fully operational product achieved within the research funding allocated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A large initial investment was needed to get the pilot model design for the resource. Since it was reusable the cost would decline over time.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff members see what can be achieved by peers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff did not have time for detailed review in their work programmes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Results can be easily and quickly achieved with staff content.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A multimedia leader is needed as the system can not be initially constructed by an ICT novice.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recording of the production process is a valuable experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Production process may change with shifts in the university ICT systems.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Feedback will be available from students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Feedback is not built into the assessment process so returns may be low.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preparation time for staff is shorter and flexible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good induction materials are needed to train staff.

Reflective summary

This paper has focused and defined a seemingly pervasive (and rarely questioned) transition that is taken place around us. The movement from the classical concept of writing research to a more fluid remediation and diversification of itself. The authors in charting transition have in part, justified an argument for critical new approaches in research to take place in this fledging area.

Our experience to date suggests that we need a new conceptual apparatus that is influential and conducive to exploring the electronic mediated environment. Our reliance on social software tools will only continue to grow in the years ahead. This dependency will need continuous efforts on our part, in order to develop a robust interdisciplinary approach to understanding and informing future decisions. This would entail a more extensive analysis and collaborative work in areas such as media and literary theories.

Various themes have emerged when we compared these learning models to the pilot case study done at the Institute for Work Based Learning:

- Theory informs design, which is then applied and adapted to the next generation.
- Human Computer Interaction (HCI) design principles should inform the offline design. It should be similar to the virtual learning environment (VLE) to promote ease of navigation and usability (Nielsen, 2007).
- A personal learning approach is preferred. Induction materials should not be constrained to the learning resources, but should help form a bond between the student and the tutors and other eLearning event stakeholders.
- When planning the design of the offline resource consider these points:
 - You may need to get health and safety documentation to conduct digital video interviews.
 - Plan for worse case scenarios with respect to digital video interviewees.
- We need to formalise the work-based learning model and apply it to the eLearning event. Ethical release forms need to be set in advance with procedures made explicit.
- Evaluation must not be intrusive for the novice.
- Show your plans and feedback to stakeholders to inform the next offline version.

There are several software applications that embrace and support the offline model. First, there is the website capture tool (Capture, 2007). This allows you to download an entire website locally onto your local hard drive and still maintain live web links to external sites.

Adobe Air and Connect Presenter are Flash-based file streaming solutions to the offline learner and learning technologist (Adobe Air, 2007). These tools and learning technology design approaches help designers to produce local resources to meet the wide spectrum of the learners' needs.

The next phase of the research will collate and analyse data from the stakeholders (students, tutors, administrators, etc) on/offline learning experience to inform revisions of the next version of the resource and its pedagogic design.

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Work-based learning developments and networks

The Institute for Work Based Learning, Middlesex University

The Institute for Work Based Learning (IWBL) was established in August 2007 to enable the University to fully capitalise upon its expertise and reputation in Work Based Learning.

The vision for the Institute is:

To be the internationally recognised centre of excellence in the use of work-based learning to create innovation and achieve the development objectives of organisations and individuals.

The Institute includes the Centre for Excellence in Work Based Learning (our HEFCE Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning in the area of WBL), the Work Based Learning Research Centre and Middlesex University Accreditation Services. The Institute works in partnership with all the Schools of the University to offer work-based learning programmes at undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral level.

The Institute is located in College House on the Hendon Campus of Middlesex University. For further information about the work of the Institute please contact the Director of the Institute: Professor Jonathan Garnett J.Garnett@mdx.ac.uk

For further information about the Work Based Learning Research Centre please contact the Head of Centre: Professor Carol Costley [**C.Costley@mdx.ac.uk**](mailto:C.Costley@mdx.ac.uk)

University of Derby Corporate: responding to a work-based learning and employer engagement agenda

On 1 August 2008, the University launched University of Derby Corporate (UDC), an operating division of the University, with a single mission to engage with employers on a broadly defined work-based learning agenda. UDC is seen by the University as marking a step change in CPD and employer engagement activities, but building on a strong base of principles and established practice over the last seven years.

Led by Dawn Whitmore, Head of Development, supported by a Head of Learning Solutions and Head of Corporate Sales, UDC has a strong central academic presence with six full-time academics at launch. These are work-based learning specialists working centrally within UDC, but with close links to the University's Faculties and their breadth of additional academic expertise. A team of four Business Development Managers together with colleagues involved in marketing and administrative functions completes the team, whose primary function is to work business to business to develop bespoke higher level learning solutions which meet the needs of learners and their employers and which are also securely located in national quality assurance frameworks.

Operating within University structures, while acknowledging that traditional University processes which are built around the needs of full time students are not always able to meet the specific requirements of employers and part time learners in the workplace, UDC will have a degree of autonomy and independence that will enable it to move quickly to meet market demand. Registration of learners is undertaken through UDC into mainstream University systems. All QA matters, including approval and validation of programmes are located in the School of Flexible and Partnership Learning (SFPL), with whom UDC has an integrated working relationship.

For more information about the work of University of Derby Corporate, please contact Dawn Whitmore, Head of University of Derby Corporate **d.whitmore@derby.ac.uk**

Centre for Excellence in Work Based Learning

The Centre for Excellence in Work Based Learning (CEWBL) at Middlesex University is one of 76 Centres for Excellence in Learning and Teaching awarded to Universities in England by the Higher Education Funding Council for England in 2005. The CEWBL is at the leading edge of developing and rewarding teaching and learning which is directly related to the demands of knowledge-driven economies.

The CEWBL is further developing work-based learning at Middlesex by:

- extending WBL to all four Schools of the University.
- embedding elements of WBL excellent practice (eg reflective practice, APEL, assessing work-based projects) within other University programmes.
- developing excellent pedagogic research.
- extending access and enhancing effectiveness through the use of ICT.
- producing excellent teaching and learning resources.
- enhancing the expertise of University staff in recognising, facilitating and assessing the use of transdisciplinary knowledge generated by APEL and real life work-based projects.
- supporting knowledge creating partnerships between the University and external partners.

The CEWBL is committed to working in partnership to achieve its objectives. Research and development teams are exploring the nature of work-based learning and work-based learning partnerships in order to enhance key areas of the work-based learning curriculum eg the use of APEL, learning agreements, work-based research methods and work-based projects to produce electronic and hard copy resources for learners and teachers. This work is supported by accessing excellent practice nationally and internationally and is being disseminated through workshops seminars; conferences and electronically.

For further information about the Centre for Excellence in Work Based Learning please contact the Director: Dr Barbara Workman **B.Workman@mdx.ac.uk**

The Work Based Learning e-Journal

The new (2008) Work Based Learning e-journal has been created to offer current articles that relate to work-based learning in higher education. Articles are written by academic staff in the field and usually relate to aspects of teaching and learning. Other articles are written by work-based learners themselves and are concerned with their on-going projects in their particular work contexts. There is also a book review section.

The Work Based Learning e-Journal provides open access to all readers and is freely accessible through the internet for immediate worldwide access to the full text of articles, serving the best interests of academic and professional communities. There is no subscription fee and interested readers can read, download, and/or print any article at no cost. Furthermore, authors who publish in the journal retain the copyright of their article. However, the Work Based Learning e-Journal is no different from traditional subscription-based scholarly journals and undergoes the same peer-review and quality control procedures.

Aims and Scope

The Work Based Learning e-Journal provides an international point of reference for the policy, research and development issues of people who have strategic and/or operational responsibilities in the broad arena of work-based learning. Drawing on the spheres of the professional, the academic and the experiential, the Journal is interested in knowledge that is not confined to discrete disciplines; it focuses upon the multi-dimensional knowledge needed for the differing contexts of work.

The values, methods and constructions of people who are engaged in worthwhile and useful work are recognised and their knowledge is taken seriously. The Journal provides an opportunity to further the debate on how knowledge is constructed and used by voluntary, private and public sectors, by individual practitioners and by educationalists.

The Journal welcomes research-based, reflective or theoretical papers, which help to illuminate the field of Work Based Learning. The Journal is aimed at higher education practitioners, organisations that partner and are in support of Work Based Learning and postgraduate students who are involved in programmes of study in or related to Work Based Learning.

Possible topics of interest could be knowledge management in organisations; the individual's opportunity for learning and self-development that can, in turn inform practice; a professional praxis in a real work situation that provides the possibility of learning through a reflective and analytic interrogation of practice; the work of professional and trade associations in continuing professional development.

Multi-national Corporations, the education sector, Professional Bodies, Labour Unions, government departments and other agencies and communities are redefining their roles regarding the ownership of knowledge that is derived for, in and through work. A range of perspectives is sought from practitioners and decision-makers both inside and outside education institutions.

For more information about the Work Based Learning e-Journal, go to **[http://www.mdx.ac.uk/wbl/research/wblrc.asp#\\$313629](http://www.mdx.ac.uk/wbl/research/wblrc.asp#$313629)** and follow the on-line links.

The Universities Association for Lifelong Learning (UALL) UK WBL network

The Universities Association for Lifelong Learning (UALL) UK WBL network started in 1993. There is a Steering group of twenty of the most active UK universities in the field of WBL. The network provides workshops, seminars and conferences for members as well as a national lobby (through UALL) to influence the direction of WBL in higher education. Annual conferences have bound proceedings which are published by the WBLRC and a selection of papers are refereed and published in special edition journals. Issues arising from the conferences workshops and seminars can be found on the network's website. See <http://homepage.ntlworld.com/paul.ballard/james/UALL%20learning%20network/about.html>

Recognising Learning through Work

(facilitated by Jean O'Neill)

The South East England Consortium (SEEC) is committed to "recognising learning through credit".

This is a newly formed group bringing together The Foundation degree network and the work related Learning Group. Drawing these groups together enables a more cohesive approach in work-based learning, reflecting the changes that have happened in these two related areas over the last six years since the original groups were set up. Its aim is to share good practice, find solutions to a range of new challenges in the light of government policy and to explore employer engagement.

For more information contact www.seec.org.uk

Notes on Contributors

Jonathan Garnett

Professor Jonathan Garnett is the Director of the Centre for Excellence in Work Based Learning (CEWBL) and Director of the Institute for Work Based Learning (iWBL) at Middlesex University. Jonathan has over fifteen years experience at the leading edge of the development of work-based learning programmes with public and private sector organisations in the UK and overseas. Jonathan is Professor of Work Based Knowledge and a founder member of the Work Based Learning Research Centre at Middlesex University. His current research interests include the use of work-based learning to enhance the intellectual capital of organisations and the role of the university in promoting work-based learning.

David Young

David Young is Professor of Work-based Learning and Head of Flexible Learning within the School of Flexible and Partnership Learning at the University of Derby. He has been engaged in the development of award-bearing work-based learning since the mid-1990s and has had significant experience in external examination, staff development and consultancy in the field in the UK and internationally. He has also presented extensively at local, regional and national conferences. He led the University of Derby team which won the Times Higher Education Award in 2006 for Most Imaginative Use of Distance Learning. He was awarded a National Teaching Fellowship in 2007.

Pauline Armsby

Dr Pauline Armsby is the Director of Masters/Doctorate in Professional Studies Programmes at the Institute for Work Based Learning at Middlesex University. She has facilitated on WBL programmes and researched various facets of the WBL curriculum such as APEL, learning agreements, WBL research and development approaches and practitioner projects for more than ten years. Pauline is also a chartered psychologist. Her principal research interests are professional doctorates and research methods employed by work-based learners.

Paul Barber

Paul started his career in the 1970s as a psychiatric nurse helping establish therapeutic communities in clinical settings. In the 1980s he co-created programmes in therapeutic community practice (RCN London). In the 1990s he joined the University of Surrey to co-design an MSc in Change Agent Skills and Strategies, a programme he subsequently developed into a peer learning community within a commercial organisation. Paul runs international workshops on Gestalt informed research and consultancy. He is in private practice as a psychotherapist, group facilitator, organisational consultant and coach. Currently Paul teaches practice-based research on the Practitioner Doctorate in Psychotherapy at the Metanoia Institute (London), plus group facilitation and facilitation at The Roffey Institute (Horsham). He is a Visiting Professor within the Department of Work-Based Learning at Middlesex University and a Fellow of the Roffey Park Management Institute.

Skip Basiel

Dr. Anthony 'Skip' Basiel is a Senior Learning Development Tutor at the Institute for Work Based Learning, Middlesex University. His research interests lie in the pedagogy for e-Learning. Through affiliation with the Adobe Education Leadership Programme and Association for Learning Technology he is involved with a wide array of R & D projects. Please see his research at www.elearning.mdx.ac.uk/research/

Maggie Challis

Dr Maggie Challis is Programme Head for Education and Training Supply with Skills for Care. She worked for many years in adult, further and higher education as teacher, outreach worker, project manager, head of centre and researcher. She has worked in three English universities on staff and curriculum development, was Higher Education Manager for Ufi/learnirect, Foundation degree manager in the NHSU, and Associate Director for Learning Innovation at Foundation Degree Forward. Maggie has published extensively and undertaken national and international consultancy on APEL, work-based learning, distance learning, assessment and quality assurance.

Raphael Commins

Raphael Commins is a PhD researcher at the University of Sussex, exploring social media theory in relation to e-learning environments. He has expertise in a number of systems such as Moodle, Adobe Connect and other learner-managed learning systems.

Carol Costley

Professor Carol Costley is Head of Work Based Learning Research Centre at Middlesex University. She works with individuals and organisations in the private, public, community and voluntary sectors internationally in the teaching and learning of work-based programmes, particularly in Cyprus where she has developed the Work Based Learning and Doctorate in Professional Studies programmes since 1996. Research interests are in examining methodologies and epistemologies in work-based learning, looking particularly at work-based learning as a field of study, especially issues relating to trans-disciplinarity, equity, ethics and practitioner as researcher. Carol is the convenor of the Universities Association for Lifelong Learning, Work Based Learning network. 1998–present and executive member of UALL.

Peter Critten

Dr Peter Critten is a Principal Lecturer of Middlesex University Business School. He has extensive experience and publications in management and leadership development. Peter is currently Programme Leader for the Doctorate in Professional Practice and the Centre for Excellence in Work Based Learning Co-ordinator for the Business School.

Cathy Dunn

Cathy Dunn is a Learning & Leadership Development professional with extensive international experience and a successful track record managing global leadership development in one of the world's largest companies (BP). Her involvement in a project to accredit leadership development within BP aroused her interest in helping organisations find ways of recognising and valuing workplace learning through qualifications and has led to her involvement with HE@Work.

Simon du Plock

Dr Simon du Plock is Head of Post-Qualification Doctorates Department at Metanoia Institute in London. In this capacity he leads two doctoral programmes: the Doctorate in Psychotherapy by Professional Studies and the Doctorate in Psychotherapy by Public Works. Both are joint programmes with Middlesex University Institute of Work Based Learning, and are doctorates open to qualified mid-career psychologists, psychotherapists and counsellors. Simon is a BPS Chartered Counselling Psychologist and UKCP Registered Existential Psychotherapist. Prior to taking this post in 2007 he led a Doctorate in Counselling Psychology programme for the University of Wales.

Zöe Guenigault

Zöe is a serial learner. She seeks out challenges in the fields of software applications and the use of ICT to deliver effective training to adults and has just finished a MA in Change and e-learning Management. These drivers have informed her career development to her current role as the Chief Executive Officer of The London South Learning Hub Ltd which delivers LSC funded programmes with an emphasis on online learning and support. It has also been a key partner in the national and regional development of learndirect delivery systems. öe also runs a business focused on data and accounts management but can occasionally be found pursuing her interests in riding, track driving and serious DIY!

Elaine Hallet

Elaine has worked in early years settings, in primary schools, in an advisory service, and in further and higher education. She teaches on undergraduate and post graduate programmes. She is the Early Years Professional Status Project Manager, a QAA Reviewer and an external examiner. Vocational interests include Foundation degrees, work-based reflective learning, workforce reform, professional progression and professionalism; research interests include Every Child Matters, early literacy, gender and feminist narrative biography. Her completed doctoral thesis investigates women practitioners' experiences of an Early Years Sector – Endorsed Foundation Degree. She leads the Early Years Research Interest Group. She presents at national and international conferences. Her publications include co-edited books, authored chapters and articles about early literacy, play and learning, reflective practice and Foundation degrees.

Morag Harvey

Morag has been working at the Open University (OU) for 13 years and has undertaken a variety of roles including Associate Lecturer, Residential School Tutor and Senior Project Officer. She joined the Vocational Qualifications Centre at the OU, now the Centre for Outcomes-Based Education (COBE) in 2000. She helped lead a successful HEFCE funded project developing a distance learning framework for Graduate Apprenticeships which included an element of work-based learning. Morag used this project experience together with her involvement in OU Foundation degree programmes to help develop an innovative approach to distance-learning work-based learning. Morag has promoted work-based learning as a legitimate area of study within higher education.

Ruth Helyer

Dr Ruth Helyer is Head of Workforce Development in the Department of Academic Enterprise at the University of Teesside. After an early career in more commercial environments; primarily literary publishing, Ruth came to academia as a mature student and has been lecturing for the last eight years in English, Cultural Studies and Lifelong Learning. For the last five years she has been delivering the Negotiated Learning Programme to part-time students who are all employed and require a high level of support and specialised advice. Work-based learning is central to the University of Teesside's mission. She is currently managing several projects at the university, aimed at engaging local employers and employees.

Elaine Hooker

Dr Elaine Hooker is Work-Based Project Officer in the Department of Academic Enterprise at the University of Teesside. Elaine's path to academia also came through the mature student route. With an early career in science and technology, primarily in industry and then in education, Elaine has been lecturing for ten years in Biological Anthropology, Early Years Education and has recently moved into Work-Based Learning. She currently works with Ruth Helyer on the Negotiated Learning Scheme and work-based projects, delivering modules and engaging with local companies and employees offering HE level learning to work-based learners.

Mike Howarth

Mike Howarth is an independent e-learning consultant. Formerly with the BBC, he currently works with the Institute of Work Based Learning at Middlesex University on several e-learning initiatives. Mike's expertise lies in pedagogic design for new and multi-media environments.

John Mumford

Dr John Mumford OBE, previously VP for the UK at BP has been a champion of in the area of workplace skills and the accreditation of workplace learning for many years. He is a director of HE@Work and was, until recently, a board member of UVAC. He is also Visiting Senior Fellow at Surrey University School of Management. Previously he has been Chairman of the Sector Skills Council for Oil, Gas, Chemicals and Nuclear, and is a Board member of Foundation Degree Forward.

Caroline Ramsey

Caroline Ramsey is a companion of the Northumbria Community and lectures in management at the Open University. Having got degrees in management, her doctorate focused on how to support managers to learn. Her particular research interest is in talk and how different ways of talking and relating promote learning-in-practice as changed practice – and so organisational change – rather than as increased knowledge. Caroline discovered work-based learning quite by accident, over a cup of coffee, and found it a great place to play with her radical social constructionist ideas amongst all those rational, modernist managers!

Simon Roodhouse

Professor Simon Roodhouse has extensive experience as an educator, manager and researcher in the fields of management, education, training and the creative industries. He has written widely and has published in international and national journals. He has also edited the Journal of Vocational Education and Training and sat on various editorial boards. Currently he is Professor of Creative Industries at the University of the Arts, London Visiting Professor at the University of Bolton and the National Institute for Work Based Learning, Middlesex University.

Barbara Workman

Dr Barbara Workman is Director of the Centre for Excellence in Work Based Learning (CEWBL) at Middlesex University. Barbara has a background of nursing and teaching with expertise in accreditation of organisational and individual experiential learning, and facilitation of work-based learning across all higher education levels. She is committed to sharing, spreading and facilitating good practice in work-based learning across a range of higher education activities.

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